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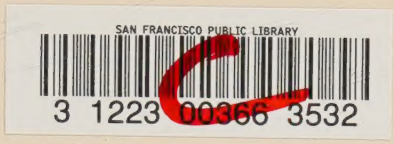

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Life and Letters of

STUART P. SHERMAN

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STUART SHERMAN WITH HIS SON JOHN, IN 1919

Life and Letters of STUART P. SHERMAN

BY JACOB ZEITLIN
AND
HOMER WOODBRIDGE

VOLUME II

FARRAR & RINEHART
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PUBLISHERS ON MURRAY HILL

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Life and Letters of

STUART P. SHERMAN

CHAPTER XIX

INNER WEATHER

IF THERE was ever a period in Sherman's life when he gave evidence of being entirely at peace with himself, contented with his surroundings, and happy in the prosecution of his literary aims, it was in the three or four years that followed on the close of the Great War. Both as teacher and writer he was apparently at the height of his power. The rapid spread of his reputation made him the cynosure of other universities, but all attempts to lure him away only served to test his loyalty to the University of Illinois.

In the spring of 1920 the University of Michigan made some overtures in his direction, which he declined because he was impressed neither by the general inducements which Ann Arbor held out to him nor by the moderately augmented salary. On the latter point he expressed himself "out of a general interest in the whole state university situation." The six thousand dollars which was then regarded as the limit of reward for academic distinction must, he wrote to Dean Effinger, "promptly cease to be an especially attractive and unusual salary for the professorial rank; or the state universities will have to drop out of the running and cease to compete with the old leaders for the best students and the best teachers." "I have very little doubt," he added, "which of the alternatives will be realized."[1] A member of the English department from Minnesota also sounded out Sherman but met with no encouragement. According to Mr. Upton Sinclair, when his name was brought up before the Board of Regents with a suggestion that the offer would have to carry six thousand dollars, "the grand duke of the board put down his fist on the table. 'There's not an English man in America worth six thousand dollars!' he declared."[2] As far as any of its Mid-

[1] June 8, 1920.

[2] *The Goose-Step*, p. 320.

Western rivals were concerned, Illinois was secure in its hold on Sherman.

His attachment to the state university was in large part implicated with and strengthened by the gospel of democracy which was coming to exercise an ever stronger sway over his sympathies. In reviewing Allan Nevins's history of the University of Illinois he had spoken of Democracy as the real hero of the book, a hero subject to base passions and self-regarding desires, yet by skillful hands capable of being guided and directed "to create something altogether good and desirable and beyond the imagination of its creator," and the moral which he deduced was that "he only need despair of Democracy who is ignorant of the art of managing men."[3] The retirement of President James in 1920 provided an impetus to solidify his thoughts on this theme once more and to present the case of the state university to the public. The idea of writing came from the president himself, but it was eagerly embraced by Sherman.

(*To President David Kinley*)

Dear President Kinley:

I think the suggestion contained in the letter from President James is most timely and altogether happy. I am only a little ashamed, for my part, that I have required to be prompted to a task which I shall regard as a pleasure, a privilege, and a duty; for there are, I think, three—no, four—distinct aspects to this matter.

In the first place, everyone who knew him, so far as I can learn, is eager to pay tribute to him and his administration; and this, to those who admired him as deeply as many of us do, will be a pure pleasure, which his retirement makes it eminently appropriate that we should indulge.

Secondly, this event gives legitimate occasion for calling public attention to the University of Illinois in a very advantageous connection. This is the privilege.

In the third place, as the letter of President James suggests, there is, and has been for a long time, a great deal of muddle-headed talk and writing about the theory of the presidential

[3] *Nation*, August 30, 1917.

office and university administration generally, which it is someone's duty to clear up. There has been a certain awkwardness about presenting the case. Presidents are supposed to be prejudiced, and professors who defend them are supposed to be flatterers. What we have wanted has been an exposition free from suspicion of self-interest, flattery, or fear; and though one cannot hope to escape entirely from that suspicion, there is a better chance, at least, of making the right impression if one discloses his conviction in connection with a president who has retired.

The fourth aspect of the matter, and the one which most acutely interests me, is the present duty of defending and championing the state universities in general in relation to democracy, which along with them is now, it seems to me, dangerously under fire from many different directions. It is being rendered obnoxious on the one hand by a no doubt well-meaning but muddle-headed movement to identify it with the so-called "Bolshevism." It is being attacked on the other hand by an equally muddle-headed and, to me, more obnoxious snobbism, a new caste movement, by a group of "aristocrats" who despair of the Republic and kick at the "populace," including those of us who are trying to educate the masses in the state universities.

Yesterday, as it happened, just as your note reached me, I mailed an article intended to punish a distinguished Princeton blue-stocking who represents a spreading Eastern spirit very injurious to all the state universities. I quote you a sentence from my article which suggests the point of the attack and the spirit of my reply:

"Let the mere general reader fancy my embarrassment, for example, when seated here in Illinois under the light of one of the state universities which I deeply trust and greatly admire, one of the institutions which, as I believe, are in a fair way to fulfill to the people the promises which Jefferson and Franklin and Lincoln saw in American life—fancy my embarrassment when I heard Mrs. Gerould declaring that in the matter of education '*We cannot count on the West to help us, for the West is cursed with state universities.*' "

Now the great thing about President James from this point of view is that he combined a sound administrative

theory with perfectly sound democratic feeling; and I shall take the earliest opportunity to say so, though I am at this minute up to the eyes in other engagements against the enemy.

My impression is that the organization of the advance on the press could perhaps better be done by an informal conference than by a formal committee; but perhaps that is wrong. There are several men not named by President James who could do some part of the job well and could also be sure of an effective avenue of publication; for examples, Deans Davenport and Clark; Professors Greene, Larson, Garner, Bogart, Newell, Fairlie, Scott, Harrington, Hollister, etc., etc. I have mentioned only men who write and who I know have access to the press. I think if you called in a group of them and each one agreed to do an article within three months we could start the ball rolling through the newspapers.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

The design once conceived, he proceeded promptly, according to his habit, to outline his ideas on paper and to look about for a means of publication. He proposed it tentatively both to the *Unpartizan Review* and the *Nation*, with a leaning to the latter because of its wider circulation. "It is an article," he wrote to Van Doren in the summer, "that I wish to fill full of meaning, and it is attachable to a book, as à propos of James's resignation. Do you think your people would care for such a performance—as an interpretation of the West, the State, Democracy, etc.?"[4] In October he wrote again that he was still keen to do it, but whether the editors to whom he applied were not similarly keen, or for some other reason, the article remained unwritten. Those editors would have liked a general treatment of the state universities, whereas Sherman at the moment was very much interested in expressing his admiration and respect for the character and ideals of James himself.

In strict keeping with his conviction was his advice to Homer Woodbridge on the choice between the East and the West: "If I felt about the inferiority of the West and the beauty and virtue of the East as you still seem to feel, I should go to

[4]August 25, 1920.

Middletown. But feeling as I do about the West and the superiority of a state university to a New England college I myself should stay in Indiana, as I stayed in Illinois when I had my parallel offer from Amherst—a choice which I have never regretted."[5] It was in the tone of a confirmed Mid-Westerner that he continued to express himself in the ensuing years. He takes occasion to describe his satisfaction with the course of things in his university. "You would be surprised to know," he writes to Woodbridge, "how many likely young fellows are applying for positions in the department already. We have two or three, at least, in the senior class to whom I am disposed to give an opportunity. I begin to think we have the young men coming our way at last, which makes one very cheerful. . . .

"Ruth was terribly stirred up by a reference in one of your letters to your return 'home' at last; but she is quieting down again, I think. She decides that though it is bad to live here in a state of dissatisfaction, it would be infinitely worse to live anywhere else with *me* in a state of dissatisfaction. I had never thought of that before. But I suppose it is true."[6] Even California, which he saw for the first time since boyhood in 1921, did not shake his loyalty. "Fine little state," he admitted to Woodbridge, "with much diversity of life and adventure. But for the gymnastic development of life—the Middle West. Here is the place for germination, burgeoning, and fructification."[7] With equal emphasis he wrote to another correspondent: "'Out' here, as you Easterners say, we think the line of state universities extending from Ohio to California is about the most significant and hopeful thing that the country has been engaged in for some years; at any rate it is a phenomenon worthy of even *your* attention."[8]

One comes across a hint, however, that Sherman was to a certain extent exercising his well-known talent for discovering the full value of the immediate objects of his interest. When

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[5]March 29, 1920. This quotation gives a mistaken impression of my position. I maintained that I was a good Westerner, but having lived for eleven years in Colorado, I knew that the Mississippi Valley was not the West.—H. E. W.

[6]February 4, 1921.

[7]September 25, 1921.

[8]To Maxwell E. Perkins, April 27, 1923.

Thomas Reed Powell, who had taught at the University of Illinois for two years, twitted him somewhat saucily with having overpraised the institution in one of his essays, Sherman replied in the same vein: "It has improved a good deal—in spite of your lamented departure. Beside all that, one must recognize that beauty is a charm existent between a discerned object and a discerning soul. Beauty is only a name which we give to the felicity arising from an harmonious adjustment to our surroundings."[9] "Your preference," Powell wrote back, "proves you more of a saint than an artist, but this does not surprise me." To which Sherman responded with a quotation from Leopardi: "He who has to live in any particular country, does well to believe it to be one of the best in the habitable globe; and he usually persuades himself to do so. Thus men in general, since they must live, perhaps do well to believe that Life is a beautiful and precious thing, and so they persuade themselves to that effect; and are indignant with anyone who thinks otherwise."

In these years Sherman began to fill his notebooks with a record of his reading, his impressions, moods, and ideas. Thoughts on democracy are scattered throughout and are mingled with reflections on human nature, society, and religion —evidence of Sherman's effort to penetrate to the basic rock of his belief.

Discovery of the Nature of Man

Why do beauty, valor, justice, labor make man happy? *Because he is made for them!* And why do ugliness, cowardice, injustice, idleness make him unhappy? Because he is *unfit* for these. This is experimental, empirical, realistic, valuable truth. Not idealism at all.

Cf. P. E. M.'s insistence (essay on Halifax) that human nature is not naturally good. There were no hope for society unless in human nature there were a profound natural impulse towards good in the higher self. Two handles for taking hold of man. Swift and the wits of Restoration take him as Iago does in the scene with Cassio of Desdemona with the sensual insinuation. (What should such creatures as I do, crawling between earth and heaven?) Thence the Yahoos and the concep-

[9]November 5, 1922.

tion of unspeakable vermin—Shaftesbury and the enthusiasts take him by the other handle. They seek to induce man to confide in that higher nature. Trust thyself means trust that law which I have stated opposite.

Collect classical passages to fortify this position:

What a piece of work is man—W. S. What should such creatures as I do, crawling between earth and heaven—Browne's Xian Morals—Pascal—Milton—Augustine? Hooker? Cicero? Aurelius. Socrates. Confucius? Cf. Leopardi, George Sand and Flaubert.

Make application of this, if possible, to contemporary politics, radicalism (necessity of). If it weren't for the conservatives, we shouldn't need the radicals. If it weren't for them both, we——

Make application of this to More himself—where he is potent is where he trusts himself and gives way to the poetic and creative and noble impulse in himself—(the inner check should produce negative results). Then it is that he fills the mind with a purer air of the mountain top, the stars, the mind of man.

The astringent qualities should be exhibited only in connection with the expansive.

Of the Necessity of Radicalism

To straighten crooked streets homes must be torn down. Cowardice of current Republicans who are either afraid of responsibility or afraid they will be called on to make some sacrifice for it.

The Radical moves like the spirit of God on wild waters and his footsteps are on the great deep.

The Republican for rights; the democrat for obligations. See Crèvecœur's *Letters of an American Farmer*. Russia and America to bring in revolutions. Lowell on the spirit of the Fathers. Cf. Bunyan in *Grace Abounding*—His notion that his function was to carry "an awakening word," to become a lay preacher to America.

Aristocracy of Jesus

Develop the hint in Leopardi's note on Jesus' denunciation of "the world," which he maintains was an idea unthought of by pagans. His selection of the *aristoi* to lead out as colonists

of the unexplored wilderness of the pure in heart. Cf. this with the mod. notion of Xist as the universalist.

Was he not a democrat with standards? Is not the truly modern aristocrat a democrat with standards?

Cf. Strauss, Renan, Chateaubriand, Wilde.

Necessity of putting in a clear light certain fundamental notions about democracy: what it permits, what it exacts. Democracy is a religion of this world—for men of science, reason. (It has a morality. It has also a sanctifying emotion. Its morality without its emotion is unattractive. Its emotion without its morality is dangerous.) Hitherto the permissions of democracy have been dwelt upon. What we need to bring forward is the exaction of democracy.

Cf. the statement of a Republican politician since the conventions that Rep. Party stands for national rights, the Dem. for national obligations: so that there is no doubt which one the people will support.

Privileged Class

In the Sixteenth Century books on gentility spoke of the nobleman as gifted by nature with excellence in horseback exercises. In the Seventeenth, one warns the gentleman not to compete with country yokels unless sure that he can excel. In the Twentieth, he is warned to keep the vulgar out entirely.

Democracy with all her friends, proposes a kind of Olympic contest, inviting athletes to contend for renown. Two sects chiefly oppose and attempt to thwart her. First those who think there should be no preliminary heats to determine who shall enter for her final honors. Second those who wish to keep the rabble from contesting, so that all the choice events shall be kept in the first families.

Center and Periphery

A spiritual center is necessary: but why geographical? Xianity has no geographical center: nor the love of God.

Why should all the young men rush to the great centers, as 1. nowhere else were to be found opening for them? Communications are easy, and frequent. Let the aspiring man make a new capital of his Iberian village. (Emerson did so. Franklin. Get some more cases.) Let each state do so; and resist the centraliza-

tion which seeks to collect all art, all science, all splendor, at the metropolis. This is the only recipe for leavening the whole lump.—Wealth will always gravitate there. But let us have *branch centers* as branch libraries—Rebuking the insolence and pride of the first comers.—Families that preempt.—"We provincials" can have *nature; learning; taste; manners; the state universities*.—Not to surrender our localism: roots; health.—

Never-ceasing swirl and eddy of the stream towards the metropolis—Loss of nature, and home, and garden, suave contacts with the boon earth, etc., etc.—Live in the centers with your heads, but in the province with heart and hand.—In city loss of the function, community activity, responsibility, neighborliness.

The thoughts sometimes distend into reflections on American ideals in general, stimulated especially by the reading of Emerson, and once take shape in a plan for a novel of philosophical ideas.

A Novel of Philosophical Ideas

Idea of a novel or tale which should embody a character like Socrates; or contain as its floating stream of thought or feeling one of the richer essays of Emerson.

These characters being introduced among modern persons would produce the story by reactions.

Can one not conceive a rather tragic story of an Emersonian character; experiencing the disillusions of life?

Take a village character—New England—Son of a minister of Civil War period. The old library. The Calvinism; the pleasureless, barren life, without art.

Then have him acquire "moral perfection" as aim, and acquire *immense stocks of culture* through books in almost utter solitude. (Give him some traits of the practical Thoreau) till he feels himself the equal of anyone you please. (This must be exhibited.)

Let him have a blooming period—lyrical—happy marriage.

(1) Then Tragedy—through wife and children—See what he says about position of women—Then through larger social relations, friends—Cruelty and coldness of Intellect.—War—pacifist—intellectual solitude.

(2) Second marriage to be symbol of social reunion; acceptance of the time; active life; science; democracy; optimism.

(Our American heroic novel relates the career of the self-made business man.—Captain of industry. What of the self-made scholar and sage—? Story of the rise to the intellectual aristocracy.—Could this not be made as striking in a way as the career of a Disraeli?

The problem is to contrive any sort of rewards and éclats in this country to mark the high points in the life of such a man. —What are they?—*Who's Who?*—Our Academies. A Professorship—A Harvard Professorship—Accompanied with pinching poverty all the way!—So was B. J. and debt. Personalize this; and make it funny.

American Literature

Our American literature has been too scornful of persons and emotions. We need the relief of tears and storms and real æsthetic rhapsody. Something struggling, hungry, starving; need for a great cause; for surrender; for something to give our life to. Here am I, such as I am. "No man can write anything who does not think for the time that what he writes is history of the world."—No man can live well or happily who does not feel that his life is going to a big cause—that will outlast him, of which he will become a stockholder. (Cf. the man who has a share in a $1,000,000 corporation. Self-respect that comes from owning a $50 share in a million dollar corp.) *He hunts around here and there for an object.* He takes a bit here and there of pleasure. He gets drunk to forget the pain of the actual. He hunts in books, he enquires among his fellows for a cure——

Here in the university: to add to the sum of knowledge—; to contribute to justice; to contribute to the joy and beauty of the world.—It must be a gesture and motion of giving.

Of Efficiency

An efficient man, like a surgeon's knife, is hard, sharp, and thin.—— He can be counted on for a "beautiful"operation, which may, however, kill the patient. He is an admirable fellow, if you approve his objects; that is to say, he is a master of technique.—— Efficiency is not a good in itself: Richard III was an efficient man.—— He should be thought of as a hired man of

special knowledge.—— He is a usurper when he dictates the end. —— He should limit himself to telling you how to do what you want him to do.—If you call in a man to prune your trees, you resent his telling you to cut them down.—— When he becomes arrogant and dictates his end, he is a usurper. He frequently defeats your end to accomplish his or recommends methods that destroy too much of what you value: as when a physician to cure heart trouble should remove the heart.

Intimately connected with the last group are some observations on the prevailing spirit of the age.

Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* is not nearly so impudent as our rascals have tried to make it out. Not an attack on decorum but on inefficiency, lack of soul, courage, fire in the belly, shuffling, procrastination. Very stirring, the one on Florence Nightingale, with that quiet slap in the face at the end to the gov't and people who did not recognize her till she was a doddering corpse. Also very animated study of Gordon and the British Gov't. His animosity all to the Victorian religion. E. g. his Thos. Arnold, as futile person bent on righteousness.—But whence comes the "modern" demand for "efficiency," zeal, fervency in business but from those consciences moulded under the old system? Relation of Gordon's Palestinian investigations to his courage. So of Manning's administration. What these people lacked was the concrete matter on which to work. To wed with religious spirit art, imagination, practical contacts with world.

Cynicism of Our Youth

They are finding a charm, which I think is a charm of a decadent period, in a blasé tone and attitude. The remedy for this is not in a hot blast of enthusiasm. From this they will draw aside with a cool young smile of superiority. (Old paradoxical situation, ruffling my nerves, is in seeing the young men smiling at the eagerness and confidence of the old men, the sons cynically deriding the ideals and fervors of their fathers.)

The remedy for this is a clear-eyed moderate positivism. To set them at an art or science with difficulties to be surmounted by the application of sheer intelligence.—This is the

time when technique is developed.—By young men weary of the world, cultivators of niceties of form, studied felicities of execution, which they fling scornfully to the grunting enthusiastic swine—(Some sweating Methodist preacher screaming about God and the devil to an audience of young men who are regulating their own conduct by principles of æsthetic taste, and are inexpressibly bored by his irrelevancies.)

The reading of Emerson was responsible, too, for a discussion of pagan and Christian ethics with his colleague, Professor W. A. Oldfather.[10]

"We talked about Christianity and paganism; and agreed that the original Christian teaching was inadequate philosophy of life. I said I found much in Emerson's view. That E.'s contribution was emphasis on pagan virtues, particularly the secrets of power for this world.

"Oldfather says he has two main objects in life: one to promote the spirit of free enquiry; the other to promote the love of beauty. I said that my special one had been given by a line somewhere in Carlyle about the Indian divinity Ram Dass: 'That he had fire enough in his belly to burn up the sins of the world.' My desire was to put a little fire in the belly.

"Then we talked about the important things in education, which we held to be in part to give a man a desire to be a man—to amount to something in himself—revival of the old sense of personal ambition—(as in Cicero). Mainly self-trust.—Passion for 'substantive achievement.' O. says the finest thing in Pindar is: '*Become what thou art.*' This is, as T. R. would say, 'corking.'

"I quoted Marcus Aurelius about the good man bearing good deeds as a grapevine bears grapes. O. said that this was distinctly higher ethical level than the Xian doctrine of reward. I said that while Marcus would appeal to one man, Jesus would appeal to 10,000."

Of more striking interest are the passages of introspection by which Sherman admits us into the workings of his own moral and literary character.

[10]October 18, 1920.

Self-Collection

Decay of the habit. Study the old custom as the divines practised it in Seventeenth Century. Also the saints of Middle Ages. See what is to be had of Roman Catholics—their present practice. Ask Sister Ruth.

Say each day: To-day I am to acquit myself like a man, a believer in ideas, a gentleman, a person with standards, one who knows what is fitting and decorous and agreeable to myself and to others, one who knows how to put a check on impulse and natural inclination, and indignations and sudden flurries of impatience and wrath—one who knows how to act so that to-morrow will approve to-day and not look backward with disgust and humiliation.—So that to-day will support to-morrow and be a foundation for its works and walls, lifted up to the point where windows may be let in and more of sunlight and sanity admitted.

Say each day also: This day is my opportunity to do something which will count for improvement in the lives I touch. This day throw your weight heartily against the wheel in the mud. This day speak with increased precision and force. This day give a lift or an encouraging word to somebody. There are 365 long days in the year when something might be done.

Oct. 28, 1920.

Honor, Fame, Glory

Is it an exorbitancy of appetite always that accounts for inability to conceive any "gratifications of vanity"? May it not equally well be a humility of the spirit before its own conception of the gulf between the perfect and the achievable? For the man who actually, by human standards, accomplishes the most is just the one to perceive most clearly the Alps on Alps arising beyond the view of men in the plain, among which, remote and inaccessible, Perfection dwells. He knows he shall perish, if he goes after her, far from human knowledge or sympathy.

Nov. 24, 1920.

What everyone wants is to be loved, admired, valued. I hardly recognized this till within a year or so; for my personal malady was like Ruskin's. Cf. his letter to C. E. Norton: "Make me love you." He felt the need of loving, not of being

loved. Relatively speaking, I seem to myself to discover a singular indifference to opinions.—But other people crave flattery, sympathy, etc., etc., etc. These the advertising managers, the sales experts—teaching how to "sell the church," "to sell the flag," "to sell yourself"—A fine, well-bred girl at the Kappas told me last night that this was the lesson she is learning in the College of Commerce—"How to sell Myself"—*What a vile phrase!* But though the approach to the idea has a commercial stench, it has also a kind of rightness—Suppose it were phrased, "How to make one's self valuable." How to make one's value recognized.

Power.

This year [1920] whatever I read seemed to be about power. Was it chance that threw these books in my way? Was my mind magnetized to attract them? Had I arrived merely by a process of growing up at that stage in life when power of one sort or another seems the one thing worth striving for? If so, I came to that stage very late. And doubtless I did come late. For though I have worked since youth with considerable steadiness and industry, I have never felt any real push of ambition; or on the other hand any real satisfaction or pleasure in gratified vanity or achieved intention. Have never, for that matter, perhaps had any special gratification of vanity. (Expand.) And now it is not in the form of applause that achievement will take its rewards in the slightest. It is rather in the vein of M. Aurelius—"proper to the vine to bring forth grapes."

Meanwhile what takes me in all the books I read is the record of the ambition of successful men.—Disraeli, Roosevelt, Carnegie.—Even in the philosophers: Emerson, Adams, etc.—The search for the philosophy of power. Room for discrimination here.

Meditation on means of presenting the idea of power to youth at early stage in their careers—Its place in the educational program. As dynamo.—As safeguard to ensure against dissipations. The man who will not loiter in the taverns of life is the man who is going somewhere. Couldn't a poem be written about this?—The hard rider, going at a gallop past Circe's bower—Did you not see it?—The leering smile, the lustful eye,

the lascivious lip.—No, for I galloped past in the night.—Spur whip and spur, whip and spur. Booted I ride. What should be his mission.—He is going somewhere—to meet a great company—on an adventure—fight at the ford and then into the heart of the black land—lions to slay—

Reading Mill's *Liberty*, Oct. 25, '21.

Sometimes one can't get a "realizing sense" of what one is reading or saying. One has a cognitive but no emotive sense of it. What is an emotive sense? How is it communicated? Today, I have it in passage after passage of the *Liberty*, which fill me with enthusiasm. Courage and nobility of mind in the man. He himself had the emotive sense.

Formerly one read for facts, information, opinions, horizons. Now to increase will, fortitude, desire; for wisdom in the intellectual life; for secrets of method; for clues.

Of Method in Literature

Watching carpenters build a house, or masons in their rough clothes—rough looking fellows with big quid of tobacco bulging the cheek—build a chimney, I feel a sense of shame at their superior mastery of art. They waste no time in using their tools. They know what they wish to produce and go promptly at its production. At every stroke the work takes shape. This is due to mastery of formulas. There is a tried and approved way of obtaining their effects.

Here a subject for meditation, study, formulation: in simple matter of producing a piece of literary criticism. To develop a set of formulas to expedite the attack on any literary problem. I have written hundreds of accounts of men of letters; yet each time I approach a new man, it is as if I had never handled one before. This is well up to a certain point; for it conduces to a certain freshness and variety of handling to come at the task without preconceived plan. Otherwise I should build like a man who sets up rows of model cottages in a modern model mining town.

It is perhaps an unfair comparison to bring the carpenter and the writer into rivalry, since the former is only the executor of plans conceived, contrived, by builder or architect, who, in proportion as he possesses originality, is a dreamer, student,

creative artist, in travail to bring forth the shapes of things unknown.

There are also notations of passing moods and casual traits.

I sit in my study, smoking a fine cigar, a volume of Petronius on my knee, beside a shelf with Horace, Montaigne, Casanova, occasionally glancing through the window to the garden world of bird music, dew, and flowers.

Spring Notes—(May)

A white cat, stalking under the lilacs on the look-out for young robins on their trial flight, makes a wild spring for a nestling which turns out to be an adult wren, pert and elusive. —Walk in a mist of soft warm light rain through rolling green fields hearing the song of the meadowlark bubble up like a little spring through rocks—Catch in the cellar a "chimney sweep"—a bird with small body and very long wings which it stretches out flat. Looks against the wall like a bat. Release it at upper window—it darts into the air with the cutting flight of a swallow.

On Dull Times

Days when no book pleases, poetry seems words, the life all gone out of it; biography irrelevant, paper books, the imaginative sympathy inactive; novels twiddle. You walk from shelf to shelf and turn away in disgust.

Other methods of diverting yourself tried—don't want to talk; play; diversions; vain; you quote Pascal about ennui; Leopardi on tedium; Coleridge;

Are in condition to take no resolution; form no plans; lack courage;

Perhaps weather plays a part; dull news; pain; hunger; above all *lack of sleep*, and *lack of exercise*.

Prescription: go to bed; get up and exercise; take a good meal —not too much—Birds begin to sing; a bit of praise or good luck; every book, classics become alive; joy returns like a freshet, scouring old griefs and languors.

Lack of spirits in the mentally jaded man which prevents his manners—Also the excessive and feverish activity which prevents his connecting with his caller.

Fear

(Rabbits that I have been afraid of)

Mem. My fear of the coachman in Hoosick Falls; the police station in Los Angeles; waiters in good hotels; porters in trains; people to whom I had omitted courtesies, avoiding them on the street; dentists.

Feb. 20, 1921.

Solitude may be rendered endurable by books; when you get a walking stick you hardly miss a friend on these roads where there is nothing visible to share; and a crackling fire on the hearth at night is company enough for anyone who asks no more of a companion than a pleasant unexacting continuous chatter under shelter of which one may pursue his own thoughts. (Some take to a dog, but a dog's eyes ask too much.) (Mem. walking with a fine lady; find oneself strewing the contents of two books on Puritanism along the road five miles —among the osage hedges.) Then there is a pipe with a tasteless tobacco, warm and familiar, nestling against one's tongue like an old family cat against one's leg; which is about all a self-centered old bachelor wants in the way of affection—when craving for intellectual sympathy has subsided into a moderate need of comfort.

Finally there are a number of sentences and maxims in which the idea is generally polished to an aphoristic point, but in a few instances left suggestively in the block.

"Moral idealism is the work of the creative imagination projecting before our feet, ahead of us, a vision of our task completed."

"I reached for a high truth and fetched down it and a great cluster of friendly thoughts."

Ends and Means

I shall protest again and again the smirching of ends which all the world desires by men who don't like the means by which others seek them—thus exclaiming against the dearest hope of the children.

Consistency of great men is in the object that they desire.

Strategists of progress try here and there and go back and around when they can't take the City of God by frontal attack.

Of the Wickedness of Great Men and Nations

Cæsar in Gaul.

Hebrews a wicked and dreadful people in love with righteousness—with an intense and narrow-minded love of righteousness.

Puritans a wicked people. See Brooks Adams.

Americans ditto—See Annals of Slavery.

Of Gratitude to God

The things for which one should feel grateful to God are not things that can be bought at the store.

Object of Education

What we need to agree upon is the object: we can find the means.

To make a good citizen of the world is the highest aim that education can propose. It includes all other aims. It includes and unites all other loyalties.

To bring the entire body of humanity into harmonious civil life and fruitful relationships.

The late Henry James occasionally set a bit of slang like a grotesque toad of jade in a ring of finely chased Roman Gold.

Reason why a poor professor is so miserable: he is unable to support his body in the style which his imagination is accustomed to. But he has poverty to prick the side of his intent.

I know not whether anyone ever praised him: if commendation was offered, 'twas lost in the busy hum of his self-applause.

Those who find satisfaction in being great and those who find satisfaction in serving the great.

Hypothesis about God

If God has left the skies, as J. Q. Adams thought, it is necessary to detain him on earth, and in the hearts of men.

Satire is a dreadful weapon at its cleanest, made for cutting and piercing like a surgeon's instrument; beware lest it be

poisoned by the unclean hands or by the maleficent guile of the operator.

Satire involves an incessant comparison; if he that uses it takes a point of view low enough he may make all civil society appear wrong-side up.

Hardy a man who required a scapegoat—came at an interval when the load God had borne on his shoulders through the ages was shifting to the unequal shoulders of man.

If you let your fancies play truant too long, your feet will follow them.

Beauty and Truth

These young people assert that we hate or despise beauty because we merely seat her at the right hand of God.

The Academic Point of View

I am not quite reconciled to that. I shall never be. It lacks two virtues one cannot do without and touch at greatness: courage and love.

Thoughts burst upon me like rain—(important at such times to have something to catch them in).

Our critical literature lacks personality, which is the only thing that makes it tolerable reading.

In 1920 Sherman served on the Committee for selecting the best novel of 1919 for the Pulitzer Prize. No award was made that year, but Sherman's letter to an associate explains his attitude toward the much discussed conditions of that award.

(*To Judge Robert Grant*)

Urbana, Illinois, February 3, 1920.

DEAR MR. GRANT:

According to my printed instructions, candidates for the prize are nominated in writing, before February 1st, to the Secretary of Columbia. If we are to extend our reading, should we not have the list of nominees?

I had read two of the three books mentioned in your first letter. Miss Brown's book impressed me as quite too undistinguished to receive the award. With regard to *Java Head* my first reaction was precisely as you describe yours. It is not firmly constructed; there are loose threads dangling—for example all that development of the young girls in the first part; and the ending struck me as pretty futile. The exotic business suggested a blend of Burke's *Limehouse Nights* with Blasco Ibañez and Conrad. None the less it was a novelty, with a flavor, and a good deal of promise; and I was inclined to say to myself, "I'll vote for it" till I read again the conditions of the award to which it doesn't at all obviously conform, though an old-fashioned moralist like Gifford might say that Hergesheimer had made marriage between a Yankee and a Manchu "gleam with salutary terror."

But if the jury sticks to the letter of these conditions will it not make itself a laughing stock to the younger generation? Will there be a novel once in ten years which combines this desired sweet wholesomeness with any originality or distinction of style? I read somewhere years ago that a good judge should extend his jurisdiction; and I suspect that those who award this prize ought to give themselves a good deal of latitude in the interpretation of the terms. We ought not to crown a licentious work, but I don't believe we should hold off till a novel appears fit for the Sunday School library. Besides, the times are changing, and very likely the Sunday School libraries of our children's times will include such books as *Java Head.*

I should like to look a little into Hergesheimer's other work and make out his tendency before I give my vote. But with my present knowledge, I should rather vote for *Java Head* than for so mediocre a performance as *Black Drop.* If I refused to vote for *Java Head* it would be rather because of its artistic defects than because it smells of the China chest. We have a right to smell of the China chest in our tales of the old New England seaboard; and one of our historians has recently written the annals of that country with special reference to the Orient.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

Being on the committee again in 1921 with Mr. Hamlin Garland and Professor R. M. Lovett, he cast his vote in favor of *Main Street*, and believing that the decision of the judges was unanimous, he was somewhat taken aback when the prize was officially awarded to Mrs. Edith Wharton for *The Age of Innocence*. Professor Lovett was equally surprised and felt called upon to make a public statement of what had taken place in the committee, quoting a letter which Sherman had written to him as embodying the reasons for his own vote too:

"I hope you will vote for *Main Street*. Lately I've made three simple canons for the literary critic—simple and unacademic. The critic is to ask of a work of art:

"I. Is it alive?

"II. Am I glad that it is alive?

"III. Why?

"I answer the first two questions about *Main Street* in the affirmative. The characters persist in memory as three- or four-dimensioned robust beings months after they are met. I remember nearly all of them, after the other people that I have encountered in the year's fiction have faded flat. That, in my experience, is the most decisive test of vitality in a novel. It has also abundant comic spirit and a critical as well as a representational force. It does something to the mind as well as to the feelings. It has communicated more life to the reading public than any other novel I can recall the fortunes of. Incidentally, I find it full of extraordinarily interesting technical inventions. I don't think the fact that the critics in this case will agree with the public ought to dissuade us. Once in a great while the public does make a best seller out of a perfectly sound book. I think this is one of the cases; and it's a thing to be rejoiced over."[11]

When he was invited to be chairman for the following year he naturally alluded to this occurrence and said he would be glad to act provided he were assured that a unanimous verdict of the jury would not be vetoed by an unexplained action of the Advisory Board of the School of Journalism. "Unless such assurance is possible," he concluded, "there is, from my point of view, neither honor nor utility in this service."[12] Not

[11]*New Republic*, June 22, 1921.

[12]Letter to F. D. Fackenthal, October 18, 1921.

only was an assurance forthcoming, but with it an explanation which convinced Sherman that the Advisory Board had not been at fault. Sherman's comment in letters to his associates, Dr. S. M. Crothers and Professor J. B. Fletcher, show how open-minded and fair he was, some years before becoming editor of *Books*, toward some of the bolder and less traditional novels that came before him.

(*To S. M. Crothers*)

Urbana, Illinois, January 21, 1922.

Dear Mr. Crothers:

. . . As you have doubtless observed, the conditions of the award seem to exclude at once about three-fourths of all the novels published in these days: "For the American novel published during the year which shall best present the wholesome atmosphere of American life, and the highest standard of American manners and manhood." In my opinion, however, these conditions ought to be construed very liberally. I mean, for example, that a novel may "present" a high standard by the implications of satire, while apparently concerning itself with a pretty unwholesome and unlovely segment of American life. Accordingly, my inclination will be to look first for an excellent novel, and, secondly, to enquire whether it is as packed with edification as the heart of the founder desired.

The Brimming Cup is doubtless a very edifying work from the moral point of view; but as a novel it strikes me as third rate. The temptation and snare set by the villain wouldn't attract or hold an ordinary self-respecting domestic mouse. There are two or more good chapters, but for the most part the story seems conventional and uninspired.

The Briary Bush I find rather moon-calfish, and *Gold Shod* Dreiserish; of the two, Floyd Dell shows more signs of a dawning consciousness that there may be such a thing as a "standard of American manners."

The five from Kelly to Poole I have not yet read.

Tarkington's *Alice Adams* I think a very creditable American novel; though not a very "big" one, perhaps the most eligible yet examined.

Norris's *Brass* I haven't fully digested. It has considerable range.

Three Soldiers has much current interest and has made its sensation as an attack on the A. E. F. It has no great power in characterization or structure but has considerable interest as a commentary.

Erik Dorn would certainly be damned by a jury of Puritans as morbid and perhaps immoral. I have found it extraordinarily interesting in style and in the central piece of characterization. The most "original" novel of the year, so far.

The Girls is said to be "wholesome." It has considerable breadth. Its style impressed me as undistinguished.

The prize for this year went by unanimous vote to Mr. Tarkington's *Alice Adams*.

In the summer of 1921 Sherman taught in the University of California and revived his impressions of the state in which he passed his boyhood years. He wrote to his mother of how the taste of fresh figs and apricots, the whiff of cypress, fuchsia, and heliotrope came back to him "as a memory laid in lavender twenty-five years."[13] Berkeley stirred romantic and Arcadian longings in his breast, thus recorded in his journal:

"Looking from the hills through the Golden Gate, one is impressed with the tremendous romantic impulse of those straits and the glimmer of the Pacific upon the imagination. One wants to sail out and beyond. Irresistible, that lure into the West, towards Japan, would be to one who daily gazed into the Beyond."

"I should like to go home at night to Berkeley, to some flower-smothered house on a crag; and commute in the morning into Urbana."

He was struck by the cheerful outward aspect of things and by the extent to which the grace and beauty of life were socialized in California. There seemed to be more of a civilization here than elsewhere in the country. He met people who entertained and interested him, and he responded to the numerous incentives to life out of doors. Nearly every week-end was given up to some excursion in the picturesque

[13] June 30, 1921.

surroundings—Monterey and Carmel, Mare Island and the Napa Valley, Mt. Tamalpais, El Portal and the Yosemite. Mingled with these was a semiofficial visit to Leland Stanford University, where he delivered a Phi Beta Kappa address and exchanged amenities with Mr. David Starr Jordan, and several calls upon the widow of Joaquin Miller, from whom he wanted information about her husband's life. Mrs. Miller's first greeting of Sherman was very informal. She said she felt like pulling his hair out for not coming up sooner, and he replied that there wasn't much of it left but to go ahead. With the ice thus thoroughly broken, the information flowed freely enough. The poet's wife asked: "Did you ever hear of anyone like Joaquin Miller in all the world? Wasn't he unique?" And the visitor replied that he was.

When his teaching duties were over Sherman traveled to the southern end of the state, finding in an attractive bungalow built by an artist in La Jolla the quiet that he sought for a few weeks of study and writing. He experienced a lowering of tension and felt a mood subdued to the tone of the scene which he viewed from the window of his cottage:

"The dark mesa to the west which from a little distance seems so destitute of life, vegetable and animal alike . . . reminds me of certain passages in Hardy's *Return of the Native* about the sort of scenery that the coming race will ultimately cherish and find consolation in, as keyed to its somber and less sanguine mood. It is rather a desolate mood of nature—with perhaps too little of feeling in it to be called melancholy. What there is of human associations in the Indians, and the vanished padres, and the old rancheros from Mexico—don't connect themselves with the traditions of *my race;* and fail to stir the blood. Their appeal is to the æsthetic—not to the ethical sensibilities. Isn't this true in general of the traveler's impressions? The special note of one's relations with the exotic—wherever?"

After three weeks here and a visit to Los Angeles, where he piously looked for the landmarks of his old home, Sherman returned contentedly to Illinois, relating the substance of his adventures in a letter to Woodbridge:

"Did I, or did I not? write you from La Jolla or Urbana, and send you a picture of myself astride the Colorado River in the Grand Cañon after my pedestrian descent of the Bright

Angel Trail before the somewhat heart-breaking ascent? It seems to me that I did. Did I or did I not sketch John and me sword-fishing at Catalina? And Ruth, John, and me in the gambling joints of Tia Juana, Mexico? Or Bess and us lunching at Berkeley? Or myself writing an introduction to Sand-Flaubert letters on the sleeping porch between the mesa and the sea at La Jolla? Or Ruth and me killing a fat rattlesnake or hunting devil-fish at La Jolla? If I did, why the devil didn't you reply? This is not a rhetorical question; but a well-conducted paragraph in the interrogative mood, with unity, mass, and coherence."

CHAPTER XX

THE UNIVERSITY TEACHER

IN SHERMAN'S writings and in his talks to students and teachers there appears a lucid and coherent conception of the ideal aims of education, particularly as they concern the teacher of literature. It was an ideal formulated in full awareness of the basic factors with which the teacher has to deal. Sherman was not one to allow a rosy cloud of illusion to obscure the realities of a situation. He saw the conditions in the average classroom as they truly were, with the standard set for the lower third and offering little incentive for the ambition of the superior third, and he saw the average student spending upon the real purposes of college life not more than one third of his available time and energy, content with "parroting" the wisdom of his instructor and "getting by."[1] He believed, moreover, that our educational institutions were deteriorating from the loss of vital personalities and that the increasing numbers in our colleges were being turned over to battalions of "teething assistants and instructors, who are not infrequently far below the level of the average high school teacher in personality and in general intelligence"; and he deplored the growing domination and subordination of the scholar by the business man, the crushing of the independents and the individualists who are the saving remnant and hope of the world.[2]

But one may pass judgment on things as they are without abandoning faith in a better order. Sherman's faith was that even the average inert undergraduate had in him capacities and powers which could be awakened and brought into play by the touch of a skillful and enthusiastic teacher. In the average student's nature, he thought, there was an awful hunger, and

[1]See "Excerpts from a Teacher's Note Book" and "The Humility of the College Student" in *Shaping Men and Women*, pp. xxix–xxxiv.

[2]*Ibid.*, pp. 45–58.

his celebrated apathy and worthlessness were owing to the failure to have this hunger satisfied. The average person, particularly in the adolescent period, has a craving to be formed, as one may see in "the worship of the football players for the coach who week after week works them like horses, and curses them," or in "the adoration of daubers in the studio for the great master, a Whistler, a Sargent, who, strolling in for a quarter of an hour, bends over the canvas and exclaims: 'Rotten! Do it like this,' and with a slash runs an infinitely instructive thumb nail through the wet paint." He interpreted this in a spirit characteristic of his own ascetic mood, as a desire to be used, to be given a recognizable meaning and interest in the pattern of life. He found the symbol for it in Rodin's sculpture of Man and His Thought, showing "the naked figure of a bearded man whose body below the waist is without form and immersed in stone. He stands facing the fair body of a young child, whose limbs are somewhat further disengaged from the rock, and breathes upon it as Elijah breathed upon the widow's son; as Pygmalion, the sculptor, breathed upon the cold marble form of Galatea; as God breathed on the dust of the Garden—*till they came alive.*"[3]

It was this symbol that suggested to Sherman the idea of the teacher as an impassioned artist, bent with his whole soul upon making men and women come alive. The aim of the good teacher, he said, was not to divulge information but to kindle the will, the emotions, the imagination, and to sensitize the mind, fill it with light, make it desirous and eager. This does not mean that he should make himself merely and vaguely "inspirational." On the contrary, he should impart quantities of information, and in good order, but he must make it *appear* important and attractive. Whatever the subject he teaches, he conceives of it as central. This may be an illusion, but it is a vital one, doing much good and little harm. "For the artist the center of the universe is *always* within six inches of his own eye."[4] Applying this point of view to the teacher of literature, he describes him, in Carlyle's language, as a "believing soul" who does not shirk the responsibilities of leadership. "He believes

[3] *Shaping Men and Women*, pp. 16–24; cf., "What the People Want," "Books," September 28, 1924.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

in giving his pupils something to react against. He is aware that most are intellectually shapeless and inarticulate, incoherent and purposeless. They are full of miscellaneous information and vague appetites and undirected potentialities. . . . He leads them to a position from which they can see for themselves the natural links and alliances between literature and the other living issues of the day and age. He gives, in short, the one thing needful that was not in the textbook: the kindling touch to the judgment and the will, which persuades a man that literature contains important ideas of truth and beauty that concern *him*. The teacher of literature who has not this gift, though he chart the course from Cædmon to Corelli, is a failure. He will kindle no torch."[5]

In his own practice Sherman gave an admirable illustration of these principles. Teaching a variety of courses, both elementary and advanced, he looked upon each as a special problem and carefully worked out a method of presentation appropriate to each. The presentation was in all cases systematic. In elementary courses he would write an outline of every lecture on the board, so that no instructor was easier to follow. Having finished this mechanical aid to the sluggish, his next step was to arouse attention by bringing home to the class with all the vividness he could command the significance of the writer he was discussing. In the general "Survey" of English literature, the problem was to enable several hundred unread students to form a distinct impression of all the great writers from Chaucer to Tennyson, with a heavy sense on the part of the instructor that they didn't care a straw about any of them. Sherman aptly compared the performance to a big evening reception where it was the duty of the host to make his unassorted and mutually indifferent guests acquainted and at home. Realizing the feeling more or less conscious in his listeners, that the men he was talking about belonged to a bygone age with little relevance to themselves, he worked, above all, to impress upon them the enduring vitality of the creations of poetic imagination and to make them see that the operations of the human spirit were independent of the limitations of time. There were men walking on the campus that morning, he told them, less alive than

[5] "Professing Literature" in *Shaping Men and Women*, pp. 63–4.

Socrates, who was buried twenty-three hundred years ago. Chaucer was as much alive as Fannie Hurst, and Hamlet, who never existed outside the imagination of Shakespeare, was as truly living as William Jennings Bryan. In seventy years all of them that filled that room with their warm bodies would be pale ghosts, how much paler than Romeo and Juliet, who never lived at all. Time, in short, reduces creatures of flesh and blood to the same substance as creatures of the imagination. The noisiest reputation of to-day may to-morrow be as empty as last year's bird's-nest, while poetry that has life in it remains permanently interesting and significant. To the mature student of literature such a statement is commonplace, but to a sophomore it is likely to come with the thrill of surprise and discovery. "It is my daily wonder," Sherman once wrote in his notebook, "to discover ignored commonplaces. You have to tell them to each generation, just as you have to tell children to keep clean. And there is always a place for a pedagogue who can learn the dialect of the day."

He used the dialect of the day when he lectured to his classes on the poetry of Browning as expressive of the "athletic" ideal. He was sure to carry his students along as he induced their imaginations to dwell on the inspiring feature in our gladiatorial intercollegiate contests—the spectacle of two bands of young men at concert pitch bent upon the perfection of their activity, and they probably would still follow him when he added what a pity it was that this spirit did not pervade the work of the university, reminding them that the men and women of the university stood to the general population of the state as the "varsity" to the rest of the student body, a model to the rest of what the human mind as well as the human body is capable.

He was again exploiting commonplace with inspiriting effect when he justified Shakespeare to a large class of beginners as one of the bonds of our common culture, one in whom all intelligent men and women are interested "just as they are interested in sunlight, free air, friendship, or any other of the major elements of well-being."

"The longer you live," he explained to them, "the more you will feel the importance in society of the few things that all men have in common. The things that *all men* love and admire are and ought to be very precious. It is not the special things that

each of us has as an individual, it is the common knowledge, the common interests, and the common desires of every community which *hold it together*. A community is a group of people with a common stock. The greater the number of things any group of people has in common, the firmer the community holds together. New towns, new communities seldom cohere as well as old towns. Old European towns have a kind of richness of interest because they have the history of a thousand years behind them in common. They have a great past in common. The people in new towns, new communities, have a more limited stock. Anything whatever that can be thrown into the common stock—an interest in good roads, or a new high school building, or a stadium, or a local poet, or even a circus—any of these things thickens and multiplies the points of human contact, and, in so far, makes that community a more interesting place to live in. If you are yourself an interesting personality, you enrich the community by being yourself. You give the community something agreeable to talk about. If you write a book that all the village reads, you draw the village together. If you write a book that all the world reads, you draw the world together; you advance its civilization. If you read a book that everyone reads, you join the community by that act. . . .

"There are only a few things left which everyone thinks that everyone should know. These few things become *the bonds of a common culture*. Shakespeare is one of them. Now the idea that I would present to you is that it is worth our while not merely to know these few common things, but to know them very well. It means a good deal that every schoolboy in England, America, France, Germany, Italy, should be able to call up the great trial scene in the *Merchant of Venice* when an orator alludes to 'the quality of mercy.' It means a good deal that every child should recall the story of Lear and his three daughters when someone speaks in his presence of filial ingratitude. It means a great deal that a whole community should have living in its memory and imagination the fair sweet lives of Shakespeare's women—Rosalind and Imogen and Perdita and Viola and Cordelia and Desdemona. If they all feel alike about these things, they will have sympathies that can be enlisted together for noble purposes."

It makes literature seem more vital, too, when the instructor

can give an immediate coloring of personal experience to his interpretation. When Sherman came to Robert Louis Stevenson he told his class he thanked Heaven that his taste for literature was formed in the nineties, when R. L. S. exercised an immense fascination upon countless thousands of readers, long before the era of detraction had set in, and, as he proceeded to analyze the inimitable charm for him of that writer, saying, "I felt it twenty-five years ago and feel it yet," it must have been only the dullest who escaped the infection of his enthusiasm or were not persuaded by his declaration that there was no man of letters now working who was "so good a spirit for college students to fall in love with in their time." It was the same with his other literary favorites. In defending Tennyson he would adopt a style of somewhat lighter familiarity to describe what Tennyson meant to his generation.

"When we were born," he said, "our parents read over our cradles: 'Out of the deep, my child, out of the boundless deep.' When we were married, we packed the padded-leather parlor table edition of *Maud* into our Gladstone bag, and read together on the way to Niagara Falls: 'I have led her home, my love, my only friend. There is none like her, none.' If in the course of our married lives, our wives became weary of us and deserted us, 'went with a handsomer man than I,' we hoped to be able to say, with what seemed to us, in those old days, the magnificent magnanimity of King Arthur to Guinevere: 'Lo, I forgive thee as eternal God forgives.'" Having candidly revealed so much, Sherman continued confidentially to tell the class that when men of his generation said they had outgrown Tennyson it was only a pathetic attempt to keep up the appearance of youth and to seem to be in sympathy with the authors of *Smoke and Steel*, *The Doomsday Book*, *The Lynching Bee*, and other works of the day. Then, with a deliciously even balance, the irony of which doubtless eluded many of the undergraduates, he led up to the pronouncement that the new poets are better than Tennyson at some things, such as describing a lynching bee or the "feel" of the Chicago stock yards, while Tennyson is better than they at others, such as serving the world as an interpreter of its higher self, acting in the priestly character, which Milton said is the true aspect of a poet, as a bearer of truth to man.

This playing upon the distance of time which separated him

from his listeners was one of the typical resources of Sherman's humor, employed by him with an effect now subtle, now broad. "When I wish to get a laugh from my students," he wrote to his sister,[6] "I talk about literary fashions as if they were like the fashions in dress or dancing. 'Last year, or a little while ago,' I begin gravely, 'we were all dancing the minuet (They all look up speechless, aghast). Now, we are all dancing the—the—uh—the two-step. (At this point, they all roar; for they know we aren't. As to the minuet, they suppose, of course, that I may be old enough to have danced that perhaps—or even the *cinque-pace* or the *lavolta*.)" To the devices for entertainment which are the stock in trade of some seekers after popularity Sherman was an entire stranger. He had no repertory of jokes or stories annually repeated and forcibly adapted to a variety of occasions, but his wit was ready at an emergency. One day a gigantic dog stalked into the room while he was lecturing to his Shakespeare class and unseen by him took a position directly behind him. The class tittered and guffawed. Sherman looked puzzled until he saw the dog. "Ah," he said softly, "I'm glad to see that there is a dog here who appreciates good literature," and went on. The flavor of the sentence was in its intonation. He would enjoy an opening to gibe in this way at the entire class, as he was moved to do after thirty students in succession were unable to tell him what a harpy was, asking with a sigh how they expected to understand Shakespeare when they couldn't even recognize a common barnyard fowl like the harpy. But he was very tender of the feelings of individuals, and if he did occasionally allow himself a little fun at their expense, it was not in a manner calculated to disturb them. When he selected some of the most ungainly and unprepossessing fellows to perform before their classmates the Pyramus and Thisbe scene from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is doubtful whether any but the keenest members of the class sensed the humor of it.

The course in which Sherman's gifts as a teacher were displayed with particular richness was the one he devoted to the writings of Matthew Arnold. A more exhilarating course in literature was probably never offered to a class of undergraduates in an American college. The breadth and depth of its

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[6]To Mrs. Katherine Gilbert, December 19, 1922.

design, the variety of subject matter and ideas, the fresh personal interpretation, the skill of its pedagogical devices gave it a distinction among Sherman's own courses. He spent endless pains on perfecting it, reworking and polishing the parts from year to year. The manner in which the students responded justified his faith in the latent interest of the average undergraduate, and encouraged his laboring over the course. This is striking in itself for an author as little popular as Arnold, but the more telling proof of Sherman's success was in the feeling commonly voiced by students in the course that they were having an exciting and satisfying experience.

The primary and characteristic significance of this course was in the manner in which it exemplified Sherman's conception of the connection between literature and life. The object, he told his students, was not chiefly to instill an appreciation of Arnold's poetry or an intellectual apprehension of his ideas, but to develop a point of view useful for considering all questions that concerned them, to affect their temper and moods and beliefs on a great variety of subjects, to make them somewhat different men at the end from what they were at the beginning. In other words, it aimed to suggest ways in which they might be happy though educated. He called their attention to a difference between the ancient conception of teaching and the modern. The ancient teachers, he said, looked upon philosophy as a guide of life and drove at practice; whereas "our modern teachers seem to live in a dreadful fear that someone will take them seriously and go out and try to practice what they have preached. The danger is small. But the ancient teachers wanted pupils who would accept what they taught as authoritative and translate precepts into conduct. They were impatient with those who attended their classes, and yet led unphilosophical lives; if they taught temperance, and pupils came to classes drunk. The equivalent of getting an A in a class with Socrates or Epictetus was to live as Epictetus or Socrates lived."[7] It was his own aim to work out with them a conception of the good life for America, and he made use of Arnold because he found in him those general ideas of which our society was particularly in need. The great value of that Englishman's character as a model was in its

[7] "Matthew Arnold: A Summary," in *Shaping Men and Women*, pp. 266-267.

roundness and many-sidedness: "Arnold conceives of man as a more various and versatile being than he is ordinarily supposed to be. He conceives of man as a being with many relations to the universe—with a relation to the state; a relation to the national form of religion; with a relation to the customary form of morals; with a relation to society, to literature, to education, to art. And he conceives that man's happiness depends upon his finding adequate and satisfactory expression for all these different relations of his nature. He praises this completeness of self-development not because it is a man's duty but because it is his delight to realize his powers as abundantly as possible."[8] Than this idea of a fully developed human personality, Sherman concluded, there is no higher earthly aim.

Sherman met his students in the course with the generous assumption that each one was interested in his own intellectual welfare and could be induced to do not only independent reading, but independent thinking as well. Every man, he said, ought to be a philosopher. Everyone should give at least fifteen minutes a day to some form of religious exercise, concerning himself with the fundamental points in his belief about his relations to the universe. He encouraged them at the very outset to prepare in imitation of Arnold a book of thoughts and maxims for the purpose of recording their intellectual and imaginative experiences day by day and thus creating habits of reflection. When he found that many of them were buying their maxims at the bookstore he made some sharp comments on getting a philosophy of life for five cents. "That," he said, "is why the life philosophy of most of you is so cheap. You really prefer ready-made and second-hand clothes to anything made to order and to fit you. . . . To be original requires work; one isn't naturally original. One is naturally an ape, a parrot, a chameleon, reflecting what one stands next to." Nevertheless, he thought it was about the best exercise he had ever given a class, and, even if it taught them no more than to read the maxims of others, not wholly wasted.

This general exercise was followed by some of a more specific nature. One required that the student, after absorbing Arnold's

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[8]"Matthew Arnold: A Summary," in *Shaping Men and Women*, p. 271.

essay on "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment" and saturating himself in Marcus Aurelius and St. Paul, should inspect his own feelings and determine exactly how he felt toward each, then analyze the grounds of his feeling and arrange his materials in some order (for example [1] Personal Life, [2] Social Relations, [3] The State, [4] God—The Chief Good), finally, after considering what other duly qualified persons have said, present his judgment and attempt to solicit a reaction in the reader by throwing the whole force of his character and taste and appreciative sympathy into the verdict. Closely related to this exercise was the study of the essay on Joubert. Joubert appealed intimately to Sherman by the exquisite purity and delicacy of his conscience and, in presenting him to the class as a type of the seeker after perfection, he dwelt on the rareness of his qualities in American writers who, while trying to make a show, allow "the sweet deep passion of art" to go out like a match in the wind. And then he pointed to the exceptions whom the student might meditate on—Hawthorne, Henry James, C. E. Norton, Santayana, W. C. Brownell—and urged the importance of forming a collection of the kind of books which "tune up" a reader's spirit:

"If you stay by the great masters, by and by you will get a vision! By and by,—not at first. The great masters, at first, repel like great mountains, great forests, great seas,—repel feeble and timid souls, who hug the fireside and the kitchen garden. But stay by the fireside and the kitchen garden—and you will never get a vision! But the vision is worth waiting for—till you grow up to it. Even if it takes you forty years to grow up. The view at the mountain top is worth climbing for even if you are all day at it. The great woods are worth penetrating even if for hours you feel as if you were lost in them. Go back again and again."

In this way Sherman found occasion to instill many other of his favorite ideas, clothing them at once with relevance and authority. Apropos of Arnold's use of foreign themes in his poetry, Sherman defined carefully his thoughts on the merits and defects of cosmopolitanism, showing his appreciation of those elements of foreign culture for the want of which our country was poorer. While hostile partisans were holding him up as the embodiment of a narrow patriotism and Puritanical

morality, he was telling his students in "English 53" that the highest aim which education could propose was to make good citizens of the world, to bring the entire body of humanity into a harmonious civil life and fruitful relationship, and that this aim included and united all other aims and loyalties. He was pointing out also how badly we in America stood in need of "fineness, elevation, distinction, high and intelligent seriousness, the grand style (less jazz and razz), the sense for exquisite workmanship, philosophical depth, the romantic note, glamour, the English sense for the delights of homes and gardens and flowers, permanence and solidity," and that these defects could be corrected by reaching out in spirit to the great writings of other lands and other apostles.

The study of Arnold's poetry was Sherman s opportunity for describing the superior value which poetry acquired for the civilized man when it was enriched with the fruits of human culture. He led up to the point by describing to his class the nature of the poetic experience, the way in which the imagination, aided by time, transforms the reality of everyday facts, making it vivid by means of a personal illustration.

"Suppose," he explained, thinking of his own excursion in 1921, "you visit the Santa Catalina Islands, which lie some twenty-five miles from the coast of Southern California. Suppose you were dropped from a balloon in the afternoon upon the shore of Avalon. You would find it at close contact more or less ordinary. You would find yourself on a sandy shore, ordinary people on the bank, people in bathing suits, bare brown rocks above you, warm sun overhead, eating houses, picture postcards, people riding horseback, all the air of a sea-side resort. But suppose you fall into a deep sleep on the sand and are carried aboard the steamer, and sail away late in the afternoon, and wake three miles out. All the common elements of the shore life have dropped; the gaunt brown cliffs rise around an exquisite little bay, and between you and the island there is the intense blue foreground of water five miles deep. Then, as you gradually swim further and further away, you catch new indistinct contours of the island veiled in mist, changing every instant; and still more, the color and quality of the light changing miraculously. A gradual deepening takes place of the blue and rose tones of the air, every harsh and sharp line melts away,

the upper edges of the cliffs of the island seem to dissolve into the sky and to mingle with the rich haze, till finally the island seems only a pinnacled, dim, soft grey cloud back against the sky with a crest of rose and gold seen across leagues of deep blue sea. This bare thing in itself no longer exists in its hard naked details. It is clothed with glamorous light and atmosphere. It is transfigured. It expresses something more than its form. It expresses its spirit. It looks like a picture. It is the sort of thing that an artist would like to put on a canvas. This is the second stage.

"But now a third stage. Between you and the island gleam the shining sails of a yacht afar off, skimming before the breeze, and wings of sea gulls flicker through the rosy mist and stir your fancy. You dream. You dream of Balboa and Cortez and the old Spanish voyagers who sailed these seas seeking for an El Dorado in the west, and of Ulysses sailing through the gates of Hercules out into the Atlantic in quest of the Hesperidian islands, and of the pale queen of old Irish legend and King Arthur sailing for the Islands of the Blest. And now the islands are clothed with a double glamour: to the glamour of space has been added the glamour of time. This is the third stage in experience. This is what culture adds to Nature—the reference of the thing seen to all that one knows which is kindred to it, to all that the race has felt which is allied to it."

This expresses Sherman's innermost feeling about poetry. Three fourths of the beauty and charm of life, he remarked, is atmospheric. Everything depends upon perspective and light and shading, upon a sense of depth and the unfathomable beyond. He objected to much of the new poetry as being an affected return to the primitive, based on the assumption that the simple emotion is more interesting than the complex. An imagist poem was almost utterly without appeal to him because it was almost utterly without *reference*. "They touch me no deeper," he said, "than a shell picked up on the shore, or a breath of spring through an open window." In keeping with this idea, too, he tried to rouse his students to an effort of the imagination toward their own surroundings, to a vision of the beauty that inhered in the apparently commonplace scenes of their daily lives. He likened the world to a lovable and sensitive egotist desiring that people should be interested in it, and

explained artistic interpretation as the creation of new foci of interest, seizing upon some unnoticed person or object and bending all the light of heaven for a moment upon it. "Consider," he said, "what Thomas Hardy does for an unknown English country milkmaid in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. He takes her as she stands in the dairy milking a cow, and he looks at her until she seems to stand between two eternities: the central incident in the history of the world is her ruin. Now people annually visit Southern England to see where Tess of the D'Urbervilles milked her cow." This is what Arnold did for Oxford when he called it "that sweet city with the dreaming spires" and made men love it better because of that phrase. What, he added, is the visible charm of England which Colorado has not, or even of Boston that Chicago has not? The Falls of Lodore, Derwentwater, the country of Lorna Doone are nothing to Yosemite or Tahoe or the Great Lakes except for their wealth in human associations.

Sherman did not stop with a statement of principles. He assigned exercises in the writing of verse, giving specific instruction to the class as how to go about focussing their poetic experience and organizing it into a rounded composition. For the benefit of the helpless he gave a simplified explanation of meter, and in general his advice was to make each line beautiful in itself, or at least vivid and interesting, with "fresh, colored, stabbing words" and images that had never been used before. It is no easy matter to treat sympathetically the attempts in verse of beginners. But Sherman's instructions to his assistant were to put some comment on these exercises even when there was obviously nothing in them. "They are baring their little souls," he said. His own extraordinary patience and kindness toward such attempts, when he thought they were honest, is illustrated by the seriousness with which he set himself to criticize in a letter some verses submitted to him by a person outside of his classes.

"I quite sympathize," he wrote, "with the spirit of your poem 'Oh, had I words!' and understand, perhaps, something of its significance to you. You have 'reactions' to the world around you, its natural beauty and its human interests, which move you deeply, and which appear to you of more worth and importance than the ordinary routine of life. Inevitably you desire to ex-

press these feelings. And in some measure you succeed. There are many glints, in the lines, of successful expression and happy imagination. For example, the image of the crimson blossom as a 'torch for lonely fisherman' is delightful. It is a thing of beauty seen and rendered more beautiful by the imaginative heightening and the relation of it to the human figures. It is quite right for one who sees these things and feels them to communicate them.

"But you are, I believe, a pianist. You understand that skillful performance on that instrument demands daily hours of practice after years of study of theory, etc. Your handling of verse is, however, that of a very young hand! Your meter is not sure. You don't command your instrument, with expert handling of, for example, pauses. And you don't distinguish apparently between happy inspirations, like that of the flower-torch, and lines which are of a stilted and wooden manner, such as

'I'*d* breathe where winds *do* blow.'

"Now, if you want increased satisfaction with your literary occupations, and particularly if they are to be in verse, you should get some of the text books and manuals of versification and put yourself through a course of technique. You should take a good anthology, and study, verse by verse, and even word by word, how the masters of this instrument obtain the effects that you admire. Then you should try for the same effects with similar matter of your own, till you feel yourself in command of the instrument. Then, and not till then, can you expect to improvise and play the tunes with real felicity which you hear in the wind and in your birch trees.

"Pardon me, if I have given you a great deal more advice than you have asked for! If I tried to play a nocturne of Chopin on your piano, I suspect you would do the same for me, wouldn't you?"

Sherman's manner in the classroom was during his early years as a teacher marked by formality and reserve. One of his students of that period thus describes him:

"Stern, reserved, a little sardonic in bearing, he had none of the ordinary professorial arts of popularity. He sought no contacts with students not registered in his courses. Within the class-room he was impersonal, businesslike and averse to any display of wit, geniality or eloquence. His method of conducting

the one advanced course which I took under him was to read careful lectures in a monotonous voice without encouraging discussion. He was never electric, and he was certainly not an absorbing teacher. Yet in an austere sense he was infinitely stimulating. His fine seriousness and intensity of purpose, the beautiful precision of his mind, his recurrent moments of profundity, his ironic scorn for the shallow or insincere, gradually kindled all of his students who were worth kindling. He lifted his courses to a higher plane than any other, I dare say, given in the university."[9]

But the picture given of him by a student in one of his last classes is quite different, and is proof of the ease and geniality which he developed in his relations with undergraduates:

"There was a sprightliness about his class-rooms even when he was not yet there, a kind of uneasy hilarity much like the air of a concert chamber, filled, and expectant of the artist. As an artist, he did not fail us; through Morrow Hall, incongruous as it may seem, still walks for hundreds of students, the dreaming Ariel, the rampant Romeo, the brooding Hamlet; up in 418 University, is an eternal echo of his oft-repeated 'sweetness and light.'

"We were avid note-takers, but, alas, not often prepared for his ever-expected tests. He was so kind; he never humiliated us singly—his drawn lip, his scornful eye, the weary, disgusted sag of his shoulders hurt us all, prepared and unprepared, sensitive and calloused. We were far from indifferent but somehow we relied upon him, because we thought him great, to be fair, and then merciful, and if we needed it, to be magnanimous. One who chanced publicly to win his casual praise, was becalmed for hours after, in a state of roseate apathy.

"A mere professor is oftener a target than a deity to advanced upperclassmen. Yet Dr. Sherman, feared, imitated, beloved, was, most of all, respected in private conversation. Even with all the tales which circulate about any figure of prominence, gossip capitalized on very little that did not display his mocking humor, his broad irony, his courtliness and kindness, the vigor of his mind, or the beauty of his written lines. In the rest-rooms and the cafés, places where professorial peculiarities are in-

[9]Allan Nevins, "Stuart Sherman with His Students," "Books," September 26, 1926.

variably microscoped, prevailed then a general recognition that this man was above petty maligning. In the classrooms and about the campus, places where gratitude is most easily forgotten and homage most readily shifted, prevails now an increasing recognition of our debt, a growing realization of the fineness of the line between regret and general grief."[10]

Sherman's interest in undergraduates extended beyond the classroom. He watched their activities in campus publications and had a special word of encouragement for every manifestation of literary intelligence. The writer of a specially good story or essay or poem was likely to receive a note of commendation from him. The editor of a column in the university daily who was in the habit of seasoning his observations with passages from Horace and Catullus was several times stopped on the campus and told that a copy of the *Illini* which contained Latin ought to be enshrined in the Museum of Classical Culture. With some he developed warm personal relations. When they left college and wanted to take up writing as a serious career, he was instrumental in getting them a start. What this personal friendship meant to those who came within its sphere may be told in the words of Allan Nevins:

"To become acquainted with Dr. Sherman as a student in his classes, to grow in friendship with him through the years of college, to maintain that friendship by correspondence and visits afterward—that is an experience always to be treasured in the memory. He never encouraged advances from the general array of his students. But to a few his door was open, and to a still smaller group of those whom he considered able and promising—his judgment was not uncolored by his personal liking—he gave his time, assistance, and even affection generously. In this relationship there was nothing awkward or labored. Of course it was the contact of a powerful, matured and disciplined mind with immature and undisciplined intellects. But it was cordial and sincere. He liked to watch the young idea shoot and put forth leaves. It need not be said that he was never expansive. His favored students will all recall sitting for long minutes in that brown urbane study, with its portraits of Eighteenth Century authors, while he smoked his pipe silently. But he made

[10]Statement by Nigel Hill [Mrs. Marvin Herrick] in the *Daily Illini*, October 3, 1926.

those half-hours beside his tall bookshelves the richest that some undergraduates spent in the university. He had, though many readers of his early essays would never have suspected it, an unquenchable gusto. I recall vividly the delight he took in Albert Bigelow Paine's *Mark Twain*, in George Moore's *Hail and Farewell*, and in the last volumes of Emerson's *Journals*, a delight that he shared enthusiastically."[11]

On the method of teaching literature to graduate students Sherman had expressed himself with great vigor early in his career.[12] In the essentials of his faith the years of experience brought about no great change, but there was necessarily an accommodation in practice to the situation with which he had to deal. With the scorn of the dilettante for philological studies or for such subjects as Old Irish and Old French he revealed no sympathy. It is stupid, he maintained, to ridicule the investigation of Cædmonian poetry: that is precisely what philological societies exist for. The error of such societies is that they pride themselves on knowing something that no one else knows and that they tend to make a barren thing of literary scholarship. What particularly annoyed him was the type of person who thought nothing save literary history deserving of serious consideration and who went about using "literature" as a term of reproach. The ultimate fruit of all literary study, he believed with Sir Philip Sidney, was to come to some conclusion as to what is permanently great, valuable, and beautiful—"the divine consideration of what may be and should be."[13]

His notion of the specific shortcomings of literary scholarship in America is made clear in his review of the work of an English scholar, Mr. Macneile Dixon's *English Epic and Heroic Poetry*.

"From one of our men," he wrote, "we should expect, in the first place, an elaborate classification of the 'types' of epic and heroic poetry, and a rigorous subordination of the individual poet to the type. We should expect, also, a diligent—so far as possible, an exhaustive—discussion of the English and Continental sources and analogues of all the important specimens. We should expect to find the pages dense with dates and chrono-

[11] *Loc. cit.*

[12] See Chapter IX.

[13] Review of Laurie Magnus's *English Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, *Nation*, August 12, 1909.

logical problems, and strange new names and titles of old forgotten poems, freshly dug from the grave of oblivion. We should expect our attention to be directed in an emphatic manner to the historical significance of this new material. We should not expect the author to betray any personal feeling, except that perhaps he might remark in passing that the death of Beowulf is 'finer than anything in Homer.' The result would be a 'contribution to knowledge.' We should not expect anyone to read it. But it would be 'invaluable as a work of reference.' Perhaps, however, we ought to add, that we do not think at this moment of any one of our men in good standing who would undertake to deal in this thoroughgoing, scientific fashion with 'Beowulf' and Spenser, Layamon and Cowley, Milton and Blackmore, Glover and William Morris." Mr. Dixon's distinction, he pointed out, is that, having been "baptized and confirmed in the classic faith, moving through the highways and byways of English narrative verse with the 'Iliad' in his ear and in his heart, he constrains us through the whole course, from 'Beowulf' to 'Sohrab and Rustum,' to keep in mind the form and feeling and style of the great classics." Moreover, he concludes, "the sustained interest of Professor Dixon's work arises from the continuous presence in it of that un-American thing—an idea."[14]

Dissatisfied with the existing basis of graduate scholarship in English, Sherman would have liked to make poetry, composition, or a zeal for letters the basis of instruction. Graduate study, he declared, ought to provide materials for passion, imagination, and feeling. It ought to be the study of the methods by which great literature is made, and it ought to include within its field art, history, philosophy, politics, economics, and science. "These things," he said, "are not the fringes of the subject: they are its substance. Literary form is all that is left strictly unappropriated." But a program such as he had in mind could not well be carried out under conditions that prevailed in graduate schools, and Sherman was not an administrative re-

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[14] *Nation*, October 30, 1913. See also his reviews of A. C. Bradley's *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, September 2, 1909; Professor Schelling's *English Literature During the Lifetime of Shakespeare*, December 8, 1910; Dowden's *Essays Modern and Elizabethan*, January 19, 1911; and A. A. Jack's *Poetry and Prose*, November 16, 1911.

former. Yet it was possible, with the example of Professor Babbitt before him, to raise the intellectual tone of literary study, to strengthen one's teaching with a firm backbone of ideas. Seeing how English and American students of literature, in contrast with the French, were generally fenced off from ideas as if ideas were in a kind of game preserve belonging to the more virile students of history, political science, and philosophy, he urged upon them the necessity of breaking through this fence in all directions, of reading as constantly as possible in philosophy and history, and of following the daily papers and thoughtful weeklies in order to acquire alertness to the complex tendencies of their own time and thereby increase their appreciation of the complex tendencies of other times. To study the literature of a period, he explained, "you must penetrate into the emotions and the ideas of which it is composed. And all such study leads you straight to a consideration of certain large aspects in the environment of the man of letters—his political background, his religious background, his social environment, his moral atmosphere, his philosophical setting, etc., etc." It was along these lines that he conducted the two graduate courses which, in alternate years, he repeated during his seventeen years at Illinois. One was on the Romantic Movement in the Eighteenth Century, the other on the ideas of typical Nineteenth Century thinkers—Mill, Newman, Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin, and Pater. In both, it is needless to say, the students had the benefit of original analysis and interpretation as well as an introduction to the sources and leading authorities. The Nineteenth Century course was probably the more individual of the two, offering more opportunities for inculcating his own doctrines of living.

Sherman accepted also the conditions governing graduate research and the production of doctoral theses. He directed a fair number of dissertations, some critical in character, some limited to the investigation and classification of "facts." When published in the series of University Studies, these dissertations passed muster with scholars. Had it been a major interest with him, he could have augmented the body of English scholarship with more of the same kind. But soon after becoming head of the department he made it a point to devolve this task upon others, taking under his own supervision only cases which had some exceptional interest for him.

He had no dearth of topics for treatment, as may be seen from the suggestions he pours out, with a little dash of cynicism, to a friend:

"If you really want to clear decks, you ought to take some pretty purely literary subject—say, one of these worthless Eighteenth Century dramatists, or better still, one of these 'Somebody or Other as a Critic.' One of my students has just done a dissertation on 'Thomas Warton.' There is a pretty good opening, too, I believe, in the Scotch rhetoricians and critics of the Eighteenth Century, professors and others who discussed in many volumes the philosophy of taste. Another good theme is 'Longinus in England.' Another is 'Horace in the Eighteenth Century'—oceans of material. Another that I suggested to one of our boys who has left is 'Joseph Ritson' —a bully biographical subject with lots of pickings for the mediævalist. Another is the 'History of Antiquarianism in the 18th.'—A wide field is still open also in the minor novelists between 1700–1800—with interesting Revolutionary materials and conflicting tendencies. Don't reveal my plots to the Harvard Dept., but take your choice! If the novel attracts you, I am willing to mention a particular author with stuff in him of some significance."[15]

It was only in confidential intimacy that Sherman indulged this impulse to cynicism. In talking to students he had no other view than to impress upon them a sense of the dignity of graduate scholarship and to excite an ardent love for the work on which they had embarked. He delivered little homilies before the English Journal Club in which he gave them very concrete and wise advice on the best attitude toward their courses, their instructors, and their fellow students, not neglecting good counsel (a little ironical, coming from such a source) on the government of their health. On one such occasion he turned a glaring light upon the cynical attitude which the practice of universities that made a fetish of degrees tended to foster, and denounced the imposture of those who looked on a doctor's degree as something "to be stuck upon one's waistcoat like the badge of a Greek letter fraternity" and thereby reduced it to a pettiness and insignificance that brought it

[15]Letter to Homer Woodbridge, May 18, 1913.

into disrepute. He told them that one reason why the academic profession in the United States suffered periodic contempt was because there were too many doctors of philosophy who ceased to study, to grow, to produce after writing their thesis, too many who looked upon the thesis as an attainment instead of as a preparation or discipline:

"Many young doctors, having produced a thesis or some fraction of it, draw back from the cost of becoming scholars and masters in their field. I wish I could say as emphatically as I feel what the cost really is. To a young doctor, who feels that the production of his thesis has nearly killed him, one may say, after he has recovered his breath: 'For the successful prosecution of your career you will have to approach death every year of your life; you should plan to do work equivalent to the production of a thesis every year of your life.' That is a hard saying. I don't think it is any *too* hard. I don't think you will easily point to any leader in the profession who isn't putting that much labor annually into his profession. That doesn't mean, of course, that he ought to undertake annually to write or publish a bulk of manuscript equal to a thesis. It may be that it will require five years to get his material into shape for the press. But as each year goes by, he ought to be one definite year's work nearer to his goal."[16]

For such effort the incentive to the true student, he declared, ought to be a strong passion for getting at the truth in its sources. "This," he said, "is one of the great and satisfying passions of life which rewards itself. Call it what you will —appetite, hunger, large curiosity—if you haven't that passion developed to such a degree that satisfying it really pleases you better, and longer and more deeply than almost anything else you can think of; unless it is so strong that you are with difficulty drawn away from it by any other temptation, then you aren't really cut out for the career of scholarship and letters."[17] Even stronger than disinterested curiosity, he held, was the spur which drove the scholar to realize his own best powers and to attain excellence in some direction. He unblushingly applied the goad of ambition, saying: "If the spirit

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[16] *Shaping Men and Women*, p. xvi.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. xix–xx.

of real graduate work is in you, you wish to strike into some path with so hot a pace that you leave everyone behind you in that particular path; and the intellectual life of a graduate school depends precisely upon the number of men and women in it who are coursing along their chosen paths at the top of their speed. . . . There ought to come a time in the life of every scholar when he builds his intellectual monument, when he gathers himself all up as completely as possible and expresses himself in a work which sums up his discoveries and his interests in the world."[18]

This attitude of Sherman's makes it clear why he was commonly more charitable to the faithful and laborious, though uninspired student, than to the more brilliant but volatile type. The former, in his effort to give his very best, uniformly elicited his sympathy and even encouragement. The latter, in spite of his attractive qualities, often brought down on his head the weight of Sherman's ire. Nearly every teacher of graduate students would understand and applaud his strictures on the "little Coleridges"—"men whose desires were much greater than their talents or their will. They are capable of forming grandiose designs, but incapable of making a beginning at anything. They wish to build Parthenons; but they are unwilling to touch a brick or drive a nail. You find this type of person in the field of literature and in the field of scholarly research—the man who hangs about the universities and in the graduate schools for years, looking for a subject large enough to be worthy of him, rejecting one subject after another as too insignificant, too petty, to occupy his great mind. He has a longing for universal knowledge, he doesn't want to limit himself to any field, he skims over many but builds upon none. And in ten or fifteen years he is still standing around with empty hands in his empty pockets while the young man who earnestly set to work on the first duty or opportunity that presented itself, has completed that and has gone on steadily from one task to another, learning new skill with each accomplished labor, till the sum of his accomplishments is impressive and his hands and brain are trained to the undertaking of the big task or subject."

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[18] *Shaping Men and Women*, pp. xvii-xix.

Toward graduate students individually Sherman often displayed a sort of paternal solicitude, making it his business even to look after their health. He was known sometimes to appear in the Seminar Room and see to it in person that some student who was overtaxing his energies went out for a walk. If one of them was for some reason incapacitated he wrote the friendliest letters of advice and encouragement, and he stood ready to give more substantial help. "You have so much courage," he writes on one occasion, "that it rather staggers one at times. I hope your adventurous spirit will carry you far. But you attempt too much. I fear you are a romantic extremist." On another occasion he advises the same young woman to accept a position in a larger town because "you will have better living conditions than you've had in a small town. You will have a piece of good beef steak which you need quite as much as the opportunity to do creative teaching." After they left the university, he continued his watchful interest in them by correspondence.

How Sherman could combine the rôle of teacher and friend appears from a beautiful acknowledgment addressed to him by a woman on completing her work under his guidance:

"Not only has he never failed to do what was within his power to make pleasant my way through the years of graduate work, but he has afforded me many valuable suggestions for thought and study and has stimulated my interest in ideas and 'the powerful application of them to life,' to an extent not easy to estimate. Moreover, by the sanity of his philosophy, he steadied my vision, distorted by an unusual and soul-trying experience overseas, and reinforced somewhat weakened standards, giving them a renewed intellectual basis. He tided me over that aimless, wavering period following the war, for, by his kindness and encouragement, he helped me to a faith in such powers as I possess and opened up to me a field of endeavor to which I can apply all the energies of mind and body, not only contentedly, but with actual joy."

XXI

LETTERS TO STUDENTS

SHERMAN'S letters to his students show the friendliest concern for their success and are rich in advice on their individual problems. Most frequently, as was natural, his advice was directed to the intellectual or spiritual welfare of his students, as in the letters in which he tries to control and impose form upon the exuberant promise of a young man.

(*To Sidney Cox*)

1016 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
September 23, 1913.

My dear Mr. Cox,

You are to be congratulated for your power to be "thrilled," to exult, to take fire. Miss Rinaker is to be condoled with if she has lost the power or has never possessed it; I will speak with her of the matter. But you are to remember that this power is the gift of God; you are to humble yourself with a *non nobis!* Nor is there great satisfaction among the celestial ones at the mere outpouring of the divine energy. You become a mortal being and the subject of praise only when you take fire at the authentic flame. Beware of journalistic fireworks.

I fall into this figurative and enigmatic style from contact with your own Asiatic and flowering page. Still apply the relentless pruning knife. I vaguely gather from the [fall] sheets (and from the post-card of the earlier summer) that you are comfortably settled for the year in good company and with fine opportunities for usefulness. Schenectady is not a bad town, though like most manufacturing centers it is much in need of being educated. There are, seriously speaking, admirable openings in such places as yours for distinguished work of the most useful sort. I hope that you will eventually be able to continue your graduate study, but I have no doubt that, even

if you do not, you will make your mark in the profession. As for the young man of your own age who is officially your superior, you should feel grateful for him. The time when you will stand alone will come soon enough. And if I were advising him, I should urge him to drive his subordinate with as tight a rein as possible! For the good of the service and the ultimate salvation of the subordinate. I have just written a letter to one of your classmates of last year in which I formulate this maxim: The swiftest way to advancement is to "shine" where you are. For you I will make another: Wherever you are and as long as you live, look diligently about you for your superiors. This I offer not as a casual reminder of your last year's studies, but as a definite and deliberate prescription for your special case. When you write to a former teacher, you will always run the risk of receiving unasked counsels.

The second day of registration has just closed. We have half a dozen new instructors of promise in the department, but I do not look again with confidence for such a group of enkindling students as I had last year. The graduate class-room is a lottery with many blanks. You have the opportunity to "catch them young," and keep them from falling into the long sleep of life, and I think you can be depended upon to do your part. I will pass your news on to such of your fellow students as remain and am sure that they will wish to add their regards and best wishes to my own.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Stevenson is right reading for an educator of young people. Of Masefield I have just completed a volume but have formed no opinion as yet.

(*To The Same*)

1016 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
September 18, 1914.

MY DEAR COX:

I thank you very much for sending me Frost's poems—even though you send in the same breath an axe to grind! I have read through the later volume with great interest—with increasing interest. It certainly indicates a various and

developing talent and a deepening consideration of life. I am not "convinced" quite throughout, but in a good many passages I feel the thing-in-itself—poetry pure and unalloyed. The book is an unmistakable contribution, and I hope it will receive due attention in this country, for it is clearly the work of a man of unusual promise.

You probably overrate my influence with the *Nation*. That organ is not very generous of space to the poets. I shall be glad to write a note to the editor suggesting that the interest of the poems calls for a careful reviewer or some such matter. If I can find time for it, I should like to undertake a notice myself. At any rate I'll write a note with the news of my pleasure in them.

Your uncle hardly represented my apprehension if he gave you the idea that I feared you would "flag." You are too full of spirits and ideas for that. My apprehension was a little excited lest you should dissipate your energies over too wide a field. A man with a hearty appetite for experience and information needs constantly to exercise self-denial—needs constantly to pull himself back into his course—to win singleness and intensity of purpose. Now your decision that you could not afford to read themes for us may indicate that you have been doing just that. I have watched already a good many promising young men wasting, or nearly wasting, the years from twenty to thirty marking time. If you can arrange next year to go to Columbia, I think you will be doing very well and wisely. What I wished to emphasize was that if you were going into college or university teaching you ought to go at your necessary training hard and early. Don't expect too much of it, but get all there is in it.

You hint darkly at the execution of some project cherished since your high school days. I can't guess what it is, but I heartily approve of any kind of definite testing of oneself. Your danger will lie in laying out large projects—projects so large that accomplishment will have to be indefinitely postponed. I applaud your friend Frost's woodman who left the cord of maple decaying behind him. . . .

This vein is continued in subsequent letters, with admonitions "to draw in his tentacles of curiosity" and attach them

to a more limited subject, to put himself as soon as possible under the discipline of hard, systematic intellectual work and not to delay till years of following his impulses make it difficult and impossible to hew to the line.

With sympathetic discernment of special needs he administered a very different sort of counsel to men and women whose earnestness of character inclined them to an excessively rigid discipline and urged upon them the desirableness of lightening the burden of their lives. In view of his own habit of health-destroying application there is a melancholy irony in his repeated admonishments to Allan Nevins to relax the tension of his labors and to cultivate the art of leisure.

(*To Allan Nevins*)

1016 Nevada St., Urbana, Illinois,
January 8, 1914.

My dear Nevins:

All the vacation I have been planning to write you a letter of holiday salutation, but I have been hurrying to catch up with some engagements, and the correspondence has been pushed indefinitely forward. What I am going to say now is that some time ago, two or three weeks, Mr. Ogden wrote me that you are becoming "a great success," and I have heard quite recently from More to the same effect. Both of these letters convey an assurance that you have the talent to go a long way in the profession. I send you these hints because I have been hearing indirectly that you were a little sick of the business and casting a rather regretful eye back towards the academic life. I don't wish to influence one way or the other, but only to say that the outlook seems very cheerful whichever way you turn. But to temper compliment with a touch of malice, I am going to add that a third correspondent, who shall be nameless, says that you are rather too steadily "serious," and P. E. M. himself drops a hint that you have not given much rein to your latent "fun." Now, all this suggests to me that you are still working too hard. It really isn't necessary. I seriously urge you to cultivate a little leisure and gayety. It will help you keep your balance; and you will like yourself and your work the more for it. It is not indispensable for you

to achieve immortal fame before you are twenty-five. When you are at last an old man of thirty-two or so, you may feel that you must settle into your stride and anticipate the grave; but that is a long way off yet. Meanwhile, relax the tension a little, and give a quarter of an hour every day to reflection on the comic side of life.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1016 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
January 14, 1915.

MY DEAR NEVINS:

As I have not been able to forget that I have owed you a letter for something like a year, your letter of January 10th and the *Ponteach* have quite overwhelmed me. For a negligent though well-intentioned person like me it is a great blessing that some people's beneficence continues without respect to the worthiness of the object.

The *Ponteach* is thing of perfect beauty. All Urbana is talking about it. I believe there are some, also, so captivated by it that they are denying themselves food and drink to purchase it. That is the last word in the way of sincere compliment. C. W. Alvord had already told me of your drastic revision of the proof; and I have reread enough of it to verify the report of your more austere middle style.

If I were disposed to quarrel with you, I might take exception to your flings at academic instruction in style. There were, if I remember rightly, some precepts commended to your attention which were not very seriously considered by you, being, as I suppose, at variance with the ideal at which you aimed in your earlier period! Certainly I recall laboring with you to simplify and break up the elaborate articulation and reticulation of your sentences. In this respect I have no doubt that journalism has been your salvation.

All our eastward travelers bring back stories of your prodigious exertions and fabulous enterprises. I hear these reports with a certain pride and delight, though of course not unmixed with apprehension. Ten years from now I am expecting

you to turn around upon the counselors of your ardent youth and cry: "Why was there no one in those days to speak to me of the wisdom of occasional loafing and inviting the soul?" You are one of the two or three men of my entire acquaintance who at the age of twenty-five should have hung above their desks: *Dulce desipere in loco. . . .*

I shall lay your proud volume on my parlor table, and say to all intelligent guests: "That is the kind of work that in the olden days was offered for the M. A. degree at this university." But I shall also add: "There were giants in those days." You have made a mark which should be a fine inspiration to your successors here. You, however, will not run the risk of any dangerous exaltation from your past achievements, because you have your eye fixed, I am sure, on undertakings in the future so difficult as to be for the present beyond your reach: which, as I take it, is the safeguard and balance wheel of all aspiring men.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

A year later he repeats some of this advice:

"We are still gasping at your prodigious enterprise of the State History; and when you recite your progress in turning out editorial matter, I feel bound again to warn you that it is not really essential that you should be both a Parkman and a Greeley before you are thirty. Evidence multiplies nowadays that men sometimes do creditable things between the ages of sixty and eighty. I hope that you are not entirely neglecting my advice that you do something at least once a week which leads to nothing but laughter.'"[1]

(*To Miss Lena Myers*)

. . . Your year as a whole should mean a great widening of your reading and multiplication of your ideas. Take in as much of the Cambridge and Boston world as you can. Don't feel that you can afford to live exclusively with books. We have books here. But we haven't the Boston theaters, nor the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, nor the places of historical interest, nor,

[1]January 21, 1916.

above all, so many young people with really serious intellectual purpose, though, heaven be praised, the numbers here are increasing in a very gratifying way.

I know you will pardon the preaching of the preceding paragraph. What I am anxious to have you do is to undergo the stimulative influences that are open to you in the new environment. This does not mean that I advise slighting at all the regular program of studies, far from it. And it means that you should make yourself a schedule which includes each week some adventure outside the classroom, an adventure in making the acquaintance of fellow students or teachers, or hearing some new speaker, or seeing a play, etc., etc.

As I get on in years I value more and more as the precious part of the educational years the acquisition of *incentives*, the conception of objects, the mastering of methods. I don't value the accumulation of facts less, perhaps, but, without the other more abstract and impalpable attainments, the facts aren't of much value. . . .[2]

(*To Warner Rice*)

1016 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
October 26, 1922

My dear Rice:

It was extraordinarily pleasant to hear from you and to have that lively account of your reactions to the first encounter with the lions, with its dramatic expectation, reversal, and preparation for further "complications." I think you have a good set of courses, at least for exploring the personnel of the department, which is, of course, at least half the reason for journeying into strange lands for culture and for the alteration of yourself into the form of "that man God meant." After the loose literary life of Urbana, it is probably well to subject your romantic mind for a time to the stern discipline of metrical romances and Romance Philology. I hope you will find occasion, however, in the year to meet Bliss Perry and if possible to have a crack with him. I don't know him well myself and never studied under his direction; but I met him again for a

[2]November 3, 1920.

few minutes in Williamstown last June and was impressed once more with his humanity and geniality of disposition. And I have just had a note from Dean Briggs which reminds me that whatever kindness I found in Harvard was incarnate in him. I wish you could meet him, too. . . .

But now I revert to my main theme, which is: make an ample place in your program for the Boston theater, museum of art, music, and that mere idle reading of current literature necessary to keep one in touch with human beings and the godless world in a place like Cambridge. If you smoked, I should urge you to go around and smoke a good deal with your Princeton and other friends, remembering that books we have always with us. As I pass into the yellow forties, I begin to think that joy should be made the test of all activities worth pursuing—a radical utterance the full consequences of which I have not followed up to their logical conclusions. You can be trusted to "stock up" with all the classrooms have for sale, and to tell the truth, I rather envy you the chance to do that in "this new and better day." But I'm still a little, perhaps needlessly, anxious to have you get all there is to be had from your year by quite gayly and imprudently assailing (like our friend Sam) *people*, who can give things receivable through the pores. In your case, it might be said that I hope you will be as much of a Pendennis as it is possible for you to be.—Well, enough of this vein.—Very likely you are already so much of a worldling that you are laughing at my holding forth in this vein.

It is agreeable to hear that Professor Babbitt saw promise in your proposed thesis. He has been ardent for years in getting undergraduates to couple the ancients and the moderns in their studies; and I should think this theme would allure him. Don't hesitate to go to him for all he has to give you—or to anyone else. If anyone that you call on seems preoccupied or rather languid, go at him again. In the end they will respect you all the more if you plague them into activity!

When I write again, I will try to leave out the advice. When you write again, don't omit any gossip. A good many of us are marked here, you remember, with the crimson, and at this distance all personalities are pleasant. The Harvard Club begins its luncheons again Thursday, with Mr. McKenzie

talking about Italy, and the Journal Club with Miss Kelso talking about the British Museum.

With best regards and good wishes.

Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
December 3, 1922.

MY DEAR RICE:

Your extraordinarily interesting letter has been duly digested—interesting and lucidly paragraphed. I regret that you are following so ill my admonitions with reference to using young Arthur Pendennis as your model. But all the young people nowadays seem to demand as their right, to be allowed to go their own way to the devil. The Glee Club seems to be the one bright spot in the gloom of Widener. When you see what inaffable and ineffable pedants these fellows make of themselves who busy themselves up to the neck in 14 lb. theses, it seems as if you might mend your ways.—Why don't you go in town and look up young Charley Griffin at his bank, and let him show you the town. I heard yesterday that he may go to So. America this winter; so you'd better start soon. I infer that Charley might have taken with more alacrity to my proposal of Arthur P. as a model.

I shouldn't worry such a lot about the Browning young man who is so closely guarding his mysteries. That sort of young person doesn't often have very much to guard. From your account of him, I should not fear duplication. He seems to be a parallel-passage, source-hunting, and annotating young pedant. That was not your line. Why pay any attention to him?—So far as I am concerned, I hope you won't write what the stricter sect at Harvard calls a thesis, at all, but make a good civilized man's book from the outset. If you don't, it will take you six years to do it over.

I have written a certifying letter to Professor Robinson. I also took the liberty of writing a personal note to Bliss Perry, not specifically commending you to him, but telling him what

a good assistant in literature you would make, and that this is the direction of your desire. I explained also that you had *not* asked me to write.

With best regards,

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Mr. Sudhindra Bose, son of the distinguished Hindu scientist, was an enthusiastic admirer who kept Sherman informed of his progress and invariably received in return an expression of sustained interest.

(*To Sudhindra Bose*)

1016 Nevada Street, Urbana, Ill.,
October 28, 1917.

DEAR MR. BOSE:

Your recent letter pleased me very much, and I hasten to tell you that you are quite mistaken in supposing that I have forgotten you. I have heard of you, if not from you, from time to time. Furthermore, I never take up Mill's *Liberty* with a class without recalling your lively interest in it years ago. I have an impression that Mill's ideas meant more to you than to any other student that has approached them in my courses. Your sympathy with his outlook illuminated the book for me.

That you care for Arnold and particularly for his religious ideas is a surprise and a fresh piece of illumination. I am glad that you do. On the whole, I think Arnold a better master, a saner guide, for most men than Mill was. I am particularly impressed with his value for students in their college years. The whole body of his work is admirable material for them to be engaged upon. I am accordingly introducing this year for the first time a new course, mainly for seniors, exclusively devoted to the study of Arnold. I am hoping that it will result for some members of the class in a general clarification, organization, and concentration of ideas—preliminary process necessary to the formation of an educated man.

I am delighted to hear that you have taken your Ph. D. degree. Your remark that you took it "incidentally" is deliciously amusing. Most of our students take it in anything

but an incidental manner! I am glad to know that you are keeping up your interest in newspaper work, which means with you, keeping up your vital connection with the living world we live in. And it gives me great pleasure to learn that you are lecturing in an American university. I wonder if you are lecturing on India. If so, I hope Arnold has made you a little more of a conservative than you were in your undergraduate days! Probably you are; for a man who has taken the Doctor's degree usually acquires mental ballast and equilibrium from his contact with history. Furthermore, a reader of the *Nation* is not ordinarily a pure red radical! Political science is a great field in these days, and I am sure that you are finding your intellectual life full of interest and opportunity.

You speak with some pride of the fact that you were the first Hindu student to receive the Master's degree in English from the University of Illinois. Well, I suspect that we shall all be equally proud of that fact here.

With best regards and good wishes

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

A group of letters to Samson Raphaelson goes rather painstakingly into the relation of the writer's character and racial background to his work. It shows not only Sherman's psychological insight and concern with spiritual values, but the breadth of his sympathy and his tact in admonition. He meets the frank egotism of youth with perfect candor and suavity and deflates its pride of unconventionality with a quiet finality. "I belong to the class of Philistines," he tells him, "who are not shocked; and besides you said nothing shocking. I perfectly understand that you regard yourself as writer more or less objectively—as an interesting and indeed engrossing experiment and specimen, quite the most beguiling under your observation. That is entirely natural and normal."[3] He does not make his cynicism and flippancy a matter for rebuke, he even approves the "humorous flippancy" of one of his stories and the cynicism combined with a certain inner sweetness of another while censuring his ignorance of "the behavior of the heart." But the steady trend of the letters is

[3]February 5, 1920.

calculated to add emotional depth and to enhance seriousness and dignity of character.

(*To Samson Raphaelson*)

1116 W. Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois.

My dear Raphaelson:

It's a great pleasure to hear from you again and to learn that you are comfortably niched at the *Times*. I don't know the building and the people as I do those at 20 Vesey St.—the *Post*, the *Nation*, the *Lit. Review*. But Mr. Ogden I know, and am very glad that you are making the acquaintance of a journalist of his type. They are not to be found at every corner! As you yourself note.

You can't and shouldn't expect a man of twenty-three to carry himself either physically or morally with the decorum of a man of sixty. He would probably be a prig if he did. Furthermore, the outward appearance and marks of decorum change from lustrum to lustrum and from generation to generation.

All the same, there is in every well developed person some innate essentially human desire for some form of delicacy, dignity, decorum—a desire which in the long run won't be denied, however much at seasons young people may enjoy revolt and imagine themselves perfectly happy in vulgarity, indignity, and indecorum. This revolt may be often enough a healthy signal that the old forms of decorum are worn out, and that decorum needs new expression. But a man who doesn't recognize what Babbitt calls the "vital decorum" as a need of his own nature, sins against the Holy Ghost that is in him.

That Socratic "Know-thyself," which has appealed to you as a working maxim, would bring you to a recognition of this vital decorum as no "Puritan" bogey at all, but as the true goal of our most intelligent human efforts,—as the goal of our endeavor and to be welcomed as such, because we are really happiest in the pursuit of it.

Well, if all this is true, and if you admit it, you must be feeling very happy at your opportunity to write for *Everybody's* the kind of thing that you regard as your best. When you really plumb the depths of that great Jewish tradition which

you have only dipped your fingers in, you will certainly find yourself more in sympathy with what a Gentile might call its Miltonic elements; and you will interest yourself in searching for the modern equivalents of them, and, I suspect, won't be quite satisfied with your singer's rag-time as the full modern equivalent for the old Hebrew chants.

Did Liveright finally take your book of stories? I shouldn't worry too much over the introduction. Be as sincere as you can when you write; and so work the matter out of your system. By and by you will be filled with another vision, and God will give you a new sincerity with a wider range.

You ought to be enjoying yourself a good deal in N. Y., in spite of the gunmen and ticket-scalpers. There is a pretty goodly company of old friends there now in one place and another—just to begin with. That reminds me, I used to know a cultivated witty young woman, Tula Latzke, who worked on the *Times* Index; she may be there still. Have you met Hill on the *Globe?* A very nice fellow. Nevins, for example, could bring you together, or Mark Van Doren.

My *Times* review of the essayists has no such edge on it as you desire. I was a little afraid, in fact, that Smythe would think it too mild. But why should one break these butterflies on a wheel? They have done no *harm* to anyone! One may go in for man-eating on occasion without forming the regular habit of devouring babes in the cradle and picnicking children.—Perhaps you will find the article which Canby says he will put into the *Review* on the 14th more to your taste.

If you find occasion please give my best regards to Mr. Ogden.

Also to Mrs. Raphaelson and her young adventures.

Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Ill.,
October 16, 1919.

DEAR MR. RAPHAELSON:

I am sure that your story shows progress in many ways, and in general progress toward a sound method. It shows rather

more seriousness than I thought you possessed. Thinking you had little of that cargo but a good deal of flippancy and cynicism, I urged you a while ago to express the cynicism and flippancy. You will pardon the frankness. You will understand what I mean when I say that the best chance for a literary talent is to express what is strongest in the man, and I thought these traits were strongest in you.

Well—you haven't any of them in the story; so you haven't followed my advice! Therefore you still do not convey the peculiar tang, the somewhat cutting and critical observation, which I have recognized as your special quality. Now very likely I was wrong. Very likely you are bringing out an inner nature of yours which you value more than the surface that I have observed. But you are not yet as well acquainted with your inner nature as you are with the surface.

There were many effective points in the story. For examples: the opening paragraphs about *race;* some of the talk about Jimmy; most of the kitten stuff; especially the comparison of Goldstone and the Iowan—very telling and suggestive.

I read the entire story with interest, and with pleasure in the crispness of the style and the incidental effectiveness of various strokes. But the thing as a whole I do not find "gripping." It seems to me to lack "depth" and "conviction" and really to require both. It is a very difficult problem that you have proposed and you haven't quite solved it. I will mention two or three reasons. . . .

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
October 26, 1919.

Dear Mr. Raphaelson:

. . . As to your remarks about the Jew giving what is peculiar to him, I urged just that a year or so ago in reviewing a book by a Jewish girl who seemed very proud that she had quite outgrown the ideas and feelings of the Ghetto, and was just like an American, regarding all the ideas of her father and mother as merely a picturesque setting for her own interesting self. I suggested that certain of the parental ideas about the

sanctity of the "law," etc., were just what American society needed. Well, I believe that is true; but it is clear that she in her then state of mind was not a person qualified to bring those ideas home to the American imagination. And I suspect the same thing is true of you. I suspect that you are too thoroughly "emancipated" to feel the peculiar Jewish virtues even imaginatively, and that your attempts to write from the Jewish point of view will result in insincerity. I may be quite wrong about this. But my own diagnosis of the trouble with the Jew is that he "wanders between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born." He, of the younger generation, has cast off the high seriousness of his tribe and hasn't yet embraced the high seriousness of the Gentile. He embraces the levity of both. Your Jewish Gentleman, having lived the life of an ordinary New York boy, seems either insincere or a fanatic with his Palestinian notions; and on the other hand, as I complained, he does not seem to have felt any marked affection for the high things of America. . . .

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
April 7, 1920.

DEAR MR. RAPHAELSON:

It's too bad to begin with apologies, but I really have to establish the fact that I haven't forgotten you even though you are by your own account in Paradise. Both your letters were delightful and composed *with the last degree of art.* I refer to the rich inlay of flattery! and the lively fillip to self-interest with which you arouse the consciousness of your correspondent. I have seen the trick tried by others but by no one else with such skill. I am writing with a high degree of seriousness. You have a first rate talent at paying a compliment. The essence of it is intelligent appreciativeness. You bring out if not one's merits at least the merits which one would like to possess. . . .

The æsthetic sketch is promising, and I've no doubt you will make it go. The tone is not so clear and sharp as it ought to be

yet. Can't you screw up the irony a notch? Have you ever read any of Max Beerbohm's sketches and satires? Every sentence in this sort of thing should cut like a knife. It is a question of comic intensity. It is a question of *precision* in the point of view. You seem to me to wobble just a bit—perhaps out of sympathy. That sort of portraiture should be done, I believe, with a smiling mercilessness. Not a stroke overdrawn. But also not a stroke that wobbles a particle towards sentiment or indulgence. Maupassant, the earlier Kipling are your models here, and you might find the short stories of Mrs. Wharton and Katharine Fullerton Gerould's *Vain Oblations* suggestive; also Mrs. Gerould's *The Great Tradition*, with special reference to three stories: "The Miracle" and "Wesendonck" and "The Weaker Vessel" (Scribner).

I'm sorry we couldn't accept your invitation to Chicago, your last week there, and your wide gesture towards California. Perhaps we shall go there some summer to take a hand in some summer session. I refused an invitation last year. I should like to revisit Los Angeles and revive the days when the height of my ambition, fed by looking in at the windows where Spanish saddles and guns were exhibited, was to be a cow-boy. When I write my novel, I shall draw on that! I have never made any venture of that dimension yet, nor have I written anything but a child's story since I was in college. I tried a hand at the short story now and then in those days, but my literary wild oats took the form of verse, which is good practice, and makes one value the individual word and weigh the sound of the phrase.

If I had cut myself loose at twenty-five from safe bread-and-butter occupations, perhaps I might by this time have mastered the art of making my pen earn my rent and board. As it is, I labor like a horse for a month and collect half enough to pay for a kitchen sink! Congratulate yourself on your adventurousness. I'm sure you will make it go, for you have a fine appetite for your world and are taking it in at a good pace. Also Mrs. Raphaelson seems to be providing what every wife should supply—faith and a spur.

With best regards to you both,

Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
October 31, 1922.

My dear Raphaelson:

. . . I read your *Century* article a few days ago. It leaves you a little "in the air." But it was a better article than I thought. Incidentally you had improved it quite a bit. And you have somehow introduced into it a certain tone of self-detachment and criticism which improved its effect. I think it a very suggestive bit of confession and declaration with genuine interest for "educators"—among others. There was one chapter which you *didn't write*. I mean a chapter on precisely why your undergraduate course failed to "take." If you could get that off at arm's length, you might find another article in it.

But having let off this steam, you are probably coming back to the narrative form again, with more of sincerity and depth in the feeling and more of precision in the stroke. If when a man adds to his stores of experience, he sets to work with zeal upon the perfection of his artistry, or at least upon the development of some phase of it, he will be sure to find that he has grown in power in that way, too.—Of course what you need most at the present time is some form of what I call in my figurative language "religious continuity" in your life. And until you can find something better, you had better seize firmly upon the "life-line" of professional conscientiousness and professional ambition. It is one of the best substitutes going—as you ought to know.

With you, and Carson, and Rice, and Nevins, and Mark Van Doren, and the other adventurers at Harvard and in the city, I find my interest turns that way very frequently in these days with a kind of envy of men in their twenties, exploring this swiftly changing and puzzling new world. I have a grand appetite and curiosity to know what you are all doing. So if you don't think of anything else that you want to say, you may be sure that all forms of gossip are always welcome.

With best regards,
Stuart Sherman.

Two of his students having raised a question about the idea of the relation of the artist to society developed by Sherman in his essay on "Literature and the Government of Men," he sent them a letter of explanation.

(*To Laurence Triggs and Charles Judah*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
April 28, 1923.

DEAR MESSRS. TRIGGS AND JUDAH:

Until the artist has been rendered self-conscious by introspection and the comments of analytical observers, he does many things without knowing why, and his work has many social bearings of which he may be quite unaware. In the total scheme of the universe it may be said that he does thus and so for *causes* which are not *reasons* to him because he never considers them.

Thus in a large general way the need for self-government might be conceived to be the *cause* of the development of the arts of expression, and yet it might never have occurred to any artist as the reason for developing his own art. But as a matter of fact if you look into the history of the various literary forms among the Greeks and Romans or even among the English, you are a little astonished to discover what a definite *practical* purpose underlay the first developments. To take only one case: no one questions that religion is and always has been a mode of governing people; nor on the other hand is there much question that the drama in England and in Greece originated as a mode of presenting religious ideas to the people.

You are both doubtless familiar with the saying: "Let me make the songs of a nation: I care not who makes the laws." Consider that with reference to the songs of Robert Burns, or consider it with reference to the hymns of Wesley or Moody and Sankey, and you will get at the sense of government as I employ it.

Finally, as I believe I remarked to Mr. Triggs at the door of Lincoln Hall, you need only ask yourselves as authors, what is the real "fun" of the vocation? Partly, no doubt, self-expression for its own sake, partly gratified vanity in being talked

about and noticed—childish satisfactions. But in great part too I believe there operates a rather fundamental human desire recognized by Spinoza when he said: "It is essential to my happiness that others should believe (he ought to have added "feel") as I believe (and feel)." You really measure your success as writers by the degree in which you have made others accept your point of view, think your thoughts, sympathize with you.

For a final example, I set out on this letter merely to reply to your interesting letter; but you see that the mere force of circumstances constrains me to attempt winning your assent to a theory of literary value. All sorts of consequences flow from this theory, consequences related to the place of poets and novelists in a Republic. For further discussion, see Plato's Republic, Book X, which I strongly recommend for the dissection of the Literati.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Lew Sarett was a member of Sherman's department when he began to find in himself the springs of poetic inspiration and went to him for criticism. He received it in a positive and encouraging manner, first in personal conferences and afterward in letters. "There are sections in these letters," writes Sarett, referring to Sherman along with Harriet Monroe and Carl Sandburg as influences that shaped him, "that are definitely responsible for the drift of my writing in the past five years, for the direction my work is taking now, and for the tone, the level, and the philosophy imbedded in *Slow Smoke* —and, too, for the new facets polished in the book. Indeed, Sherman played a more important part in the production of *Slow Smoke* than he was ever aware of. . . . S's reference to the need for cutting additional facets in one's poetical character is interesting. I recall many conversations with him on this matter; it was one of his pet ideas. He declared that a poet should give thought to cutting new facets with every new book, to building a rounded poetical character, so that at the end of his literary life his work would reveal a varied, balanced poetic personality. He often cited John Masefield as an ex-

ample; he felt that Masefield was consciously building in that direction."[4]

In one of his earliest letters Sherman writes to Sarett: "I shall expect from you a wonderful bag of poems in the fall, 'colorful' and oozing with 'human interest.' Don't forget to make your Indians exactly like people in Urbana, except for their color. That is the secret of Homer and Shakespeare."[5]

(*To Lew Sarett*)

Jan. 1, 1922.

. . . Your Indian pieces, as I have frankly admitted on previous occasions, don't interest me very much in so far as they are truly Indian. But you have something peculiarly your own in them and in your comments on them, and you can probably afford to work that vein somewhat further. For me, the charm in the *Box of God*, for example, is not in its specific Indian character at all. It resides in the lines of natural interpretation, where you express your own poetic feeling for freedom, nature, etc. To me at least, all that is best in the poem would be just as potent, and more appealing perhaps, as white man's sentiment. I don't believe, as a matter of fact, that it is Indian sentiment at all. I believe that you are perpetrating interesting falsifications of Indian sentiment. Of course this is just what Chateaubriand and Pierre Loti and all the other romanticists, who are in love with exotic color, have done.

The gist of the idea is to think out a little more carefully what Geo. Moore would call your "poetic character."

With best regards to all your family and best wishes for the New Year,

Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

MY DEAR SARETT:

No, of course I meant no "harm" in speaking of your "falsifications" of Indian sentiment. You admit the impeach-

[4]Letter to Jacob Zeitlin, January 6, 1928. See Harry Hansen's *Midwest Portraits*, p. 284.

[5]July 15, 1919.

ment yourself when you speak of the crassness of his sexual life, his cruelty, etc. Your treatment of his love affairs makes him out a Nineteenth Century romanticist. You say you can't do him in these respects as he is, because you don't "vibrate." Where he falls short of your ideal, you substitute yourself.—Well, that is what I mean by "falsifications." I don't object. I am not Babbitt! That is the way romantic literature has been written from Chateaubriand to Loti.—But if you are going to be a romanticist in that sense, make the most of the type—work it out as fully as possible. If you are going to be a realist, then you should push your realism as far as it will go. That is the way, it seems to me, to make your treatment significant.

Now, in the development of your type you can attain originality in two different ways. (1) By mercilessly presenting the Indian as he really is with all his cruelty, crudeness, etc., firmly etched into the picture. That, I suppose, has not been done in poetry. The way is pretty clear—if you choose realism. (2) You can attain originality if you romanticize, but the way is less clear. The temptation, the easy thing, will be to encore Chateaubriand, Loti and the rest; I mean to reproduce the melancholy sentimental exile among the savages, who has been done again and again. Every young man falls naturally into that soft sentimental vein when he treats of Indians, South Sea Islanders, etc.

The other thing is to accentuate as much as possible the difference between this soft sentimental person and yourself—athlete, scout, hunter, fisher, naturalist, and I know not what. No one knows but yourself and you know probably only in a very imperfect way. Then the problem is self-definition—"Know thyself." . . .

Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

P. S. You may remember that Lafcadio Hearn found Loti the key to his treatment of the Japanese and that Synge found Loti helpful in interpreting the Irish peasants of the Western islands. His three books, *Pêcheur d'Islande*, *Madame Chrysanthème*, and especially the South Sea Island book, would, I think, be specially suggestive to you. Have you read anything of Chateaubriand?

(*To The Same*)

Nov. 5, 1922.

My dear Sarett:

Thanks for your interesting letter, and then for *The Box of God*. Your progress in versification is remarkable, and, from my point of view, it is the most interesting thing in the new book. You write now a lithe light line full of real metrical life, and you pass from line to line like a dancer. That is excellent! In going through the pieces this time, I have been particularly struck (beyond or rather in addition to the title-piece) with the entire Thunderdrums sequence and the Indian Sleep-Song. I like the council talks and chats, too, more than I used to. They have a dramatic reality and sound human substance. —The lyric personality presented in the earlier part I still find a little thin and unsubstantial—for you. You are not thin and unsubstantial. As before, I believe you need to give more consideration to cutting additional facets to your "poetical character." Your letter indicated that you had some such large project in mind. Of course you need not necessarily work at your lyrical character. If you have good narrative or dramatic stuff, stay by it, strike on, by all means. Only, if you are going in for lyrics, you ought to widen your range.

I might say in addition that I was cheered by the sound of confidence and resolve in your letter. That combined with hard work will take a writer a long distance. When he adds to his chariot a love of the theme and the singing which makes *almost* everything else in the world of little account, he can go on—indefinitely far. You seem to have all three of these steeds tugging at your car.

Dean Babcock and Weirick are among your many friends here who keep up interest in your poems and praise *The Box of God*. I haven't said so much about that because that has been adequately praised. But I wish to applaud as heartily as possible all the many signs that I see which prove you have taken the file-work of the artist seriously.

With best wishes and regards,

Very sincerely yours,
Stuart P. Sherman.

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
January 4, 1923.

. . . If you will take out your Arnold and examine the epic similes in "Sohrab and Rustum," you will see what I mean by keeping the images clear and sharp, by confining the comparison to the essential detail. This procedure allows you to be just as picturesque and detailed as you please about your bearers. . . .

If you had been much saturated in Greek culture, I think that you would have felt that your Indians in the pillared stadium had become young Athenians, and you probably would have introduced some hint of the union of Yankee and Greek, pioneer and Olympic hero. But that is matter for another revery; and is a digressive comment. It might have been a strand in your braid justly enough, to be sure; for as a matter of fact, of course, it is ancient Athens and not aboriginal America which has its resurrection in our stadiums and university athletic fields. Step into the Museum next time you are in Chicago and sit down for half an hour before the Parthenon frieze, and you will *feel* what I am saying.

(*To The Same*)

Oct. 22, 1923.

Dear Sarett:

. . . I know of no news so joyous as the news of enthusiastic production among my writing friends. And to hear that your subject had taken hold of you and was eviscerating you in the grand style was grand news. All that I could have actually done on the occasion was to come up and applaud. I do that now—a long round of applause. I hope you have a theme in which you are going to realize yourself—the best there is of you, with all its complexities and diversities. You will reward yourself so completely by the mere accomplishing of it that, when it is done, you will be free forever, perhaps, from anxiety as to what anyone shall say about your work. To the writer,

that is the true "peace of God"—to have satisfied his own conscience and desire, and to have passed into a state of blissful indifference to the idiotic commentary of garrulous mankind. . . .

To G. H. Carson, who was seeking a career in the "higher" journalism, he wrote, "Don't expect to take the town by storm in your first summer. But if you wisely and steadily cultivate your powers of observation and faithfully work away at your ironical pictures of men and things, I think you will find a market and that the editors will like what you do,"[6] —following the encouragement up somewhat later with another letter.

(*To G. H. Carson*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
January 28, 1923.

Dear Mr. Carson:

I remarked to Mr. Bourland the other day that you had become in an astonishingly short time a very "sophisticated" reviewer. You have developed a *concreteness* and *personality* of style which are very promising for your career as reviewer and still more as essayist.—You ought to be "arriving" before long in the *Atlantic* and the *Yale Review*. You should also please Canby with a piece in your lighter vein for his mid-article. In your "formula" you have now nearly every necessary ingredient—except perhaps one. One I think you need a little to meditate on—that is what Pater would call "sweetness" and Hazlitt "gusto" and Sir Thos. Browne, "O Altitudo." In a short notice you may be merely "mordant" and "colorful" and "picturesque," etc., etc. But when you let yourself out for an informal essay of some extent, you will find that your friends will ask, after they have enjoyed your surface gayety, what "inner sweetness" you find in the days as they pass. How to become clearly conscious of that element, how to express and communicate it, is one of the central problems for a writer of your talents.—I have great hopes of your promise. I think you are going to make your mark. And I hope you are

[6] July 9, 1922.

finding time to feed your mind with a regular diet of good reading as well as with the experience of life.—One who is immersed in the contemporary interests of journalism is tempted to rely on that and his natural abilities. But the way to pass on beyond your journalistic contemporaries is just to keep enlarging your stock of ideas and acquaintance with the ripened old wine of literature.—Incidentally I was much pleased by your quotation from Browne in your review of *Americans*.

My best regards to you and Raphaelson and all the Golden youths from this region. It only this moment comes back to me that I have stressed one of the two watchwords of the new literary league: "Ignorance and Gusto"! I suppose the first of these words is simply a modest man's euphemism for Learning, a sort of Socratic camouflage for "Wisdom."

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

CHAPTER XXII

LEADING THE DEPARTMENT

WHEN in 1910 Sherman assumed the chairmanship of the Department of English temporarily it was, if not exactly with trepidation, at least with a marked degree of diffidence. With a heavy sense of responsibility he prepared for the first meeting as if he were going on trial for his life. The feeling did not wear off during the whole term of his regular tenure. The burdens of a department such as he had to administer are far from being child's play; they might well tax all the energies of an ordinary man. It almost called for the talents of a dean to manage a staff which, before he left the department, came to number seventy or more professors and instructors, representing such diverse interests as Public Speaking, Journalism, Business Writing, and the very unusual division of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, which was annexed to the English Department during the war, and to grapple with the fairly complex problems offered by the teaching of composition and literature to a multitude of undergraduate students drawn from half a dozen colleges, and graduate students as well. The department had numerous relationships and obligations to fulfill, to the university as a whole, to the different colleges that compose it, to the high schools of the state, and to the public at large. These cares often irritated Sherman—his official duties, he once said, kept him mad about 30 per cent. of the time—but he never washed his hands of any of them.

When, in later years, he went for treatment to a well-known "photographer of men," he learned that he looked "too American," not "executive" enough, and lacked an adequate "greeting" look in his eye.[1] In the face of these limitations of his nature it is remarkable how well he contrived to do his job. One gift of the "successful executive," as he is popularly con-

[1]Letter to John, February 14, 1926.

ceived, Sherman certainly did lack—the gift, namely, of getting things done with a lift of the eyebrow, as it were. He accomplished nothing without sweat. There was a feeling on the part of some of his colleagues that he toiled over routine matters more than he needed to, that he did not entrust as many details as he might to other members of the staff. But this was not, as with some executives, owing to a passionate absorption in the details or to the complacent conviction that no one else could do a given thing as well as himself. It was more often than not due to a hesitancy to encroach upon the time of others if he could possibly avoid doing it. He, who knew the value of time incomparably better than his associates, showed a scrupulous delicacy in the demands he made upon them.

This is not to say that Sherman did all the work of the department. There were chiefs for the divisions and for the large sectional courses; there were, besides an executive committee consisting of full professors, committees for specific purposes such as graduate courses, "English majors," the library, English readings, university lectures, high-school conferences, award of various departmental prizes, and others. Each of these committees had a definite business to attend to and enjoyed complete freedom in its responsibility. Not only was there no disposition on Sherman's part to meddle, but a pronounced display of boredom if he was too frequently applied to for counsel. He did not distribute jobs as marks of honor but with a view to getting done what needed to be done. In committees of which he was himself, *ex officio*, chairman, and in meetings of the department, he carried out the democratic principle in its practicable features. Questions of departmental policy were nearly always put to a vote, and the will of the majority was decisive. There was about Sherman as little as possible of the dictatorial or official. Time and again he subordinated his own inclination to what seemed to be the preference of the larger group. When he asked for an opinion, it was with the expectation of getting real assistance and of having his course of action influenced by it, not as a perfunctory concession to the vanity of a colleague or to conciliate a dissenting voice. In all this there would seem to be no special ground for praise, were it not that an opposite spirit is too often met with in academic circles. It was nothing more than a

natural and reasonable recognition of the dignity of his profession, and no calculated policy could have been more successful in winning the loyalty and respect of his associates.

Sherman's considerateness and sense of justice showed itself particularly in his dealings with the younger members of the department. In a university of the size of Illinois there is a tendency for a great distance to develop between the administrative heads and the "rank and file" of instructors, and for the relations between them to be confined to a very narrow groove of formality. A dean is more easily approached by a freshman than by an instructor, for the latter has to make his communication through the chairman of the department. It is obvious, therefore, that in case of any difficulty it will go hard with the young teacher who cannot count on a sympathetic and fair-minded head to present his side, and if his difficulty should be with the head himself, his chances would not be worth a broken penny. When complaints were made to Sherman directly by a student or through the dean they were patiently listened to and, if not too frivolous, examined. But in practically all cases he regarded it as his first duty to act as a buffer between his instructors and their accusers. It might be the charge that a member of his staff had said in class that he wished "the damn Bible had never been written" which Sherman was obliged to sift, reporting "Mr.—— impresses me as a frank person and not ashamed of his opinions, and quite willing to admit such a statement if he had ever made it." Or the complaint might be against the character of the teaching and elicit this kind of reply: "As you know, I regard students as particularly well placed in Miss ——'s sections, for she combines broad intelligent interest in her subject with willingness and ability to drill beginners in detail. Students of the loose, indolent type who fill our class-rooms in the hope of having 'culture' ooze into them through their pores after it has softly emanated from the instructor, are sometimes made uncomfortable by Miss ——'s insistence upon a certain mastery of facts: that discomfort is their salvation." Once he was even called upon to defend advanced fashions in the costume of some young women of his staff, and acquitted himself with a worldly grace which was hardly to be expected of so formidable a "puritan."

(*To Dean Babcock*)

October 6, 1920.

DEAN K. C. BABCOCK,
304 University Hall.
MY DEAR DEAN BABCOCK:

I have taken the matter of the costume of members of my department under advisement, and will do what I can directly and indirectly to persuade the members in special question to avoid "all appearance of evil."

At the same time, I think we who are of the older generation must remember that "modes and morals" are changing around us with an "acceleration" produced by the war, for which one of our spiritual leaders gave public thanks to God.

For my part, I have become so thoroughly accustomed to seeing all young women under fifty dressed like grammar-school girls that I no longer notice their costume, except when one of them appears with a dress that reaches to the shoe tops.

The younger generation is going through an education. It is being convinced by demonstration that the connections between the trunk and the earth observable between the ages of one and twelve do persist essentially unmodified after the latter age, and are not, as was vaguely thought, reabsorbed into a vague circumambient rustle and mystery.

It is not absolutely clear to me that this demonstrative process is not going to be in the long run wholesome, as part of our age's discipline in facts, "seeing things as in themselves they really are," rather than guessing at them through a cloud of rosy illusions.

If such should prove to be the case, then one may conceive it as becoming eventually a public duty on the part of the teachers of youth even to take a lead in the discipline, and to undergo cheerfully the slander to which the pioneering spirit is at all times subject.

I would have you, however, regard all that is said in this letter after the first paragraph as purely conjectural and speculative, the free play of mind about the subject, confided to you as between one philosopher and another, and not practically governing or influencing my attitude towards the gen-

eral subject of departmental costume, with reference to which, however we may differ as to the permissible shade more or less, we are, I am sure, in substantial accord.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

But where the quality of Sherman's wisdom and humaneness appears most strikingly is in his manner of handling the case of a young fellow who had committed an indiscretion which the authorities at the moment regarded as grave enough to warrant dismissal. Sherman unhesitatingly recommended him to a friend, and when taxed with concealing significant information, justified his position in two noteworthy letters on grounds that might be pondered with profit by men who exercise similar official authority.

(*To Homer Woodbridge*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
October 4, 1923.

DEAR HOMER:

I don't recall exactly what I wrote to you in this case, but I am sure that I tried to give you the right sort of general impression of the man. In writing a letter one has to use one's own judgment as to whether details belong in or not. If I solicit a letter of recommendation concerning a candidate that I am inspecting and that I know something about (and *that*, generally favorable)—I feel rather huffed and indignant when one of the important letters, ten lines long, spends five lines explaining that the candidate, though a brilliant writer and a sound scholar, makes a noise like a dog when he eats his soup. —It is a matter of *proportion*.

So much for general theory.

As to this case, I have never possessed any details about the matter for which he was permitted to resign.—But I did not wish to have him resign. I went to the Dean and told him that I hoped the matter would be dropped—with a reprimand. I feel quite sure that *he* wished that it could be dropped.

But the man happened to belong to his fraternity; and for that reason he felt in duty bound not to shield him. He asked me to write out my views and he took the matter to the President. Now, there happened to be a rather acute case of undergraduate discipline on at the time, and the President, I think, felt the necessity of rigor; he insisted on our getting a new man at the end of the semester or thereabout.

Next point. These matters were *not public property* at all. The man's apparent reason for withdrawal from the staff was to give his entire time to graduate study. He was allowed to remain in the graduate school. The dean of the graduate school who had him in classes and, subsequent to the action, learned of it, regretted the disciplinary act, and if he had known of it earlier would have intervened if possible to prevent it. (*This is most strictly between you and me.* I happen to be a rather intimate friend of the dean of the graduate school. I don't suppose that he has expressed this idea to another soul, except the President).—Now, I have written this passage to suggest reasons for supposing that your new Illinois members don't know anything about the case. It was *not* campus information.

I have written also to show that two deans and myself would willingly, I think, (certainly I would willingly) have kept the man on my staff. Since that was the case, I was willing to take the risk involved in commending him generally to you as likely to be a successful man in the place. (Cf. the case of Daniel Webster, etc!) I do not believe in the doctrine of the irretrievable when I can help it. I don't care to see the *careers of young fellows of talent ruined* by a slip which you or any other intelligent man knows is, in most circumstances, considered venial. You ought to tell the man, who still retains a certain boyishness, that he ought entirely to shut up: you ought to become the custodian of his conscience, if he needs one. Anyone who runs a staff like mine has repeatedly to accept responsibilities of this sort. I have had some heavy ones on my conscience in times past. I have not always shared them with my Dean; and *I don't intend to do so.* If I have a valuable man with a flaw, I may think his values outweigh his flaw. If I do, I will privately carry responsibility for the flaw rather than bring it to a scrutiny where nothing but the flaw can be seen.

So much for ethics. When I see you next, if you like, I will

discuss some other sorts of cases—in which you will, I am certain, have a lively interest.

I need not say that I regard this entire letter, especially with reference to my own "ethical theory" as between you and me. —Not that I would not freely declare it to our own administration here. I would unhesitatingly do so, if there were occasion for it. But I naturally write to *you* without meticulous care in the precise phrasing of my position.

Well, what do you think of it? . . .

(*To The Same*)

October 13, 1923.

DEAR HOMER:

Do you know that in New England colleges it is almost impossible for a man to be even considered for a position, if he has separated from his wife—even if she has deserted him and she is the manifest offender? When I was in —— for example, it was common talk that —— would have to go if he were divorced from his lady. I know of another case, almost exactly parallel, where the man was respectfully asked to withdraw on account of his unsuccess in domestic harmonies. . . .

You reply that your sense of "professional standards" would make you treat these matters more austerely. I don't accept the "standard" as professional at all, in cases like *that*. I think it is a remnant, a residuum, of ancestral Hebraic sense of *religious uncleanness*, to be compared with the law which declared a woman "unclean" after childbirth. Professors in general are desperate cowards in this entire field. That is the conclusion I am being forced into.—Of course the nest must be kept *clean*. But that means *clean* to the eye—on the outside; that is what it means to those who say it must be kept clean. None of the professors, personally, intimately, honestly gives a damn whether —— lives with his wife or not. But they are *scared white* lest some of their females should care, etc., etc.—(I don't know whether there has anything been done in this particular case: I use it only for illustration). "Cæsar's wife should be above suspicion"—Yes. And each member of our profession, in any *official action*, conceives of himself as Cæsar's

STUART SHERMAN AT DUNEWOOD IN 1913

wife.—As Mr. D. H. Lawrence would elegantly phrase it: "Good God! Better a bellyache than a face chalk white with the sense that you are Cæsar's wife."[2]

There was a girl in my department who appeared two or three times at an afternoon tea with a *married man!!* Swift tongues flashed. My colleagues, some of them, came to me, and said I should dismiss her at the end of the year. I had a little talk with the girl, in which I uttered wise words about Cæsar's wife. But to my colleagues I said in effect: "What! dismiss a girl for appearing at tea with a married man! Have you anything 'on' her? Is there anything anywhere but wagging tongues and an appearance at tea? It is none of my business who she appears at tea with."

"Yes, but she came to a party at a private house with this man."

"Good God, no! What! Tea at a private house? O, nefarious act! And the man was married? O, horrible!" etc., etc.

Dear Homer, as Mr. D. H. Lawrence, whom I don't much admire in other respects, says: It gives me a bellyache.

. . . . . .

All the foregoing is in the realm of abstract ethics, and is intended for your consideration as the descendant of sixteen Puritans.

. . . . . .

But as to your question: I *had* and *have* no information whatever on our friend's relations with women.—He went around quite a bit with one of my assistants the first years he was here; but she took up later with another of our youths and married him. Since then I have not been acquainted with his attentions to the fair. As he is a young *unmarried* man, it *ought to be assumed* that he is interested in them; but I can't say a word about his behavior in this respect, for I don't know anything about it. *Deo gratias!*

About the other matter, some of his fraternity brothers of course must have known whatever there was to know. But

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[2]This is a fine bit of righteous indignation; but it ignores the issue which I raised, namely, whether in recommending a candidate to a friend, one may fairly suppress all mention of what would generally be regarded as a serious flaw.—H. E. W.

they had no reason for talking.—These matters don't come into the open forum here, as perhaps they do in a smaller place. You must remember that many of us are not known by sight or by name outside of our own departments. *Gratias Deo!*

If the matter should come up, I am willing to stand for whatever I have said as to my own attitude. And you could say, I suppose properly, that I was not alone in the matter. But it doesn't seem to me quite proper to refer at third hand to the opinion of "Dean Blank" when these opinions are to be used outside the intimacy of such correspondence as yours and mine. If you had occasion, you could of course write directly to anyone you pleased.—But as I said, be a wise Uncle to the youth, if possible, and teach him to live like Cæsar's wife.

Best regards,
Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

In view of an attitude such as is evinced in these letters, it should be easy to understand why Sherman enjoyed remarkable harmony within his department. There might be some internal resentments. It was inevitable that in so large a group there should be persons who were disaffected because they felt they were not receiving their dues. Moreover, Sherman's disposition was not made of sugar; like Charles Lamb he did not "like all people alike," nor they him. His air of polite mockery puzzled and embarrassed some persons permanently in their contacts with him, though often it was only a cloak for his own shyness. One who shared his office in Columbia in the summer of 1912 said, "It took most of the first six weeks to decide whether he was smiling at me or only at the universe, but when I finally decided that it was not I alone who amused him, I became very fond of him, and my admiration kept increasing."[3] There are some men who do not enjoy this sort of humor even when it includes the rest of the universe along with themselves. But there was also an acid vein in Sherman's nature which broke out when he was too sorely harassed by requests that seemed to him unreasonable. He could speak under provocation in a very "tempery" fashion, and once he made his displeasure so strongly felt by one of the elders of

[3]Letter to Jacob Zeitlin from Professor W. B. Cairns, July 15, 1928.

the department that the latter took to his bed for forty-eight hours. But these were rare incidents and not typical occurrences.

One of the annual reports which Sherman communicated to the Dean of the college gives a very fair impression of the atmosphere that prevailed under his administration.

(*To Dean Babcock*)

The Northgate Hotel, Euclid Avenue,
Berkeley, California, June 16, 1921.

My dear Dean Babcock:

Without any statistics at hand, I find myself returning to the general impression that I gave you in the train to Chicago, namely, that this has been a most satisfactory year in the Department of English. There has been no friction of any sort among members of the department. The men who for several years have been in charge of divisions and special functions of the department have performed this work smoothly and responsibly. Though we had, as usual, a fairly large new element to assimilate, this process took place quickly; and with only one or two exceptions we found that our new members were such as we were glad to invite to return next fall. I think there has been this year a quite discernible increase among us of a feeling that the department is a good place to work in, and that the number of universities with which one would prefer to be connected is limited. Among the more ambitious this feeling is due, I believe, primarily to two causes: the condition of the Library and the provision for aiding individuals with material for special researches; and the reasonable teaching schedules together with the encouragement given to study and scholarly production. I am rather strongly of the opinion that the University might well increase its subsidy to publications by doubling the allowance to the University Studies, in view of the almost prohibitive cost of bringing out at private expense the sort of studies that our doctors are producing. I hope that the new budget will allow a much more liberal allowance to the Library than it has enjoyed for the last two or

three years; for a real superiority in Library resources will, for a long time to come, be a primary object in the competition of the Western universities.

At the present time I feel that the most important part of our graduate instruction is that which we give to members of the staff. In general, the students sent to us from the small colleges of the state have not been young people of the highest promise for educational work. But the twenty-five or thirty members of the staff who are also enrolled in the graduate school have this year almost without exception justified fully the system which permits them a margin of time for study. They have been by all odds our most serious students, and they have gained in power as teachers. In this connection I wish to emphasize the value on the one hand of the rigorous graduate discipline given to a considerable group of them by Professor Bernbaum; and on the other hand the discipline in teaching given to the staff in Rhetoric 1 by Professor Scott. From both these teachers, our younger members learn lessons of systematic work and organization which are an invaluable preparation for positions of responsibility. A graduate of our *staff* who has made his way to the Ph. D. degree by way of Rhetoric 1 and the elementary courses in literature is pretty nearly ripe for an assistant-professorship; and, if he has any natural ability, I believe he will not be badly trained for the part.

The most gratifying aspect of our undergraduate work has been the increased registration of serious students in the advanced courses—particularly the increase in the number of men who are taking literature seriously. I am disposed to attribute this phenomenon to the fact that a considerable number of the staff—I will mention Dr. Weirick, Professor Hillebrand, Dr. Boyer, Professor Harrington, Professor Woolbert, Professor Jones, Professor Zeitlin—have cultivated personal relations with students, and have wakened their curiosity, in one way and another, with regard to the "intellectual life." The undergraduates may work no harder now than they did five years ago, but on the whole they impress me as more sophisticated in the better sense of the word, better informed with reference to general ideas and points of common knowledge, and with a somewhat clearer conception of their purpose and opportunity in the university. In this general connection

I should like to commend the work, somewhat apart from the classroom effort, of Professor Bernbaum in the Journal Club, Professor Hillebrand and Professor Woolbert and his staff in connection with dramatic activities of the students, Professor Scott in connection with student publications and the *Illini* Board, and Dr. Weirick in connection with the Poetry Society, which he has conducted with zeal and enthusiasm throughout the year.

With regard to the publications of the department, the university bulletin will of course show the year's facts; but it will not register the promise, which is still more gratifying! To go into detail about "promise" is likely to be disastrous—like inspecting too closely a wild bird's nest. But I think one may say that in general there is a growing awareness throughout the staff that it is desirable to become, if possible, an authority in one field or another, and to stand for something outside the city limits.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

The report reflects also how Sherman's ideas of teaching were communicated to the rest of the department. The influence of his example counted for much, and he reënforced the impression from time to time with invigorating precept, fulfilling the part of an inspiring leader. He held up to them as patterns his own great teachers. Whatever he might have to say of the limitations of Professors Kittredge and Babbitt, he made it clear that they were both teachers with the full strength of soul and body, who put all they had into their profession. "They don't give the effect of holding anything back. Their teaching is stamped with the full weight of their passion, their imagination, their character. They are not mere channels of information. They are moulders of men. They shape and form the personalities that come within their reach. One makes Kittredgians, the other Babbittians, just as truly as Lord Byron made Byronists." His aversions were the elegant lecturer who reads papers fit for a ladies' club, and the plodding investigator who, weary of a long night's work, pulls out the manuscript notes of his next article in the field of his private researches and drones away to the welcome bell. The latter

species he thought the more mischievous because it received greater encouragement from administrations. The best teachers in his view were not necessarily those who were contributing to the learned journals but the men who would contribute if they had time. Experience even wrung from him the admission, however regretfully made, that a man might be a contemptible scholar and an excellent teacher, at least for undergraduates.

To hearten and stimulate the members of his staff in the business of instruction, Sherman almost every year delivered a little harangue by which he strove to enhance the importance of what they were doing, quickening their pulses with a sense of stronger life and investing their drab duties with the garb of solemn dedication. In one such talk he quoted a passage from one of Milton's Italian letters to the effect that the two most important sorts of persons in the State are those who make the social existence of the people "just and holy" and those who make it "splendid and beautiful," including in the second class the teachers of the mother tongue. "I find it distinctly inspiring," he observed, "to look at our business here in the Department of English in this large way: I mean as an opportunity to help in making the social existence of the citizens splendid and beautiful." He then proceeded with the quotation, in which Milton attributes the fall of Athens to "the general vitiation of its usage in the matter of speech," and, deriving from it "the rather interesting thought that the stability of the Republic depends on what we do in the Department of English," he defined the mission of the teacher of English in impressive terms:

"If you are a teacher of expression, oral or written—and we are all teachers of expression, good or bad—you have every day an opportunity to make your students fall in love with style. When a man or woman is in love with style, he is already half educated. I take it that our business as teachers of rhetoric, oral or written, is to infatuate these young people with the various beauties of speech, beauties that touch the mind, and beauties that touch the ear, the beauties of logic, of power, of melody.

"If you are a teacher of literature, you have every day an opportunity to impart to your students some portion of the

human tradition, some share in that common culture the diffusion of which makes a community; the richness of which makes a community a good and interesting place to live in. No class of teachers has such opportunity and such responsibility as the English teachers with respect to enriching the common culture.

"The responsibility of the teacher of English is all the greater because the decay of the Classics and the feebleness of foreign language study has made English the instrument through which the ordinary college man to-day receives what he receives of the humanities. If he reads Plato, Virgil, Dante, Montaigne, Cervantes, Goethe, he reads him in English. Much of his history he gets from Shakespeare's plays and Scott's novels, from reading about Milton and the Civil War, from reading about Burke and America, about the English poets and the French Revolution, the American poets and slavery and the Civil War. Much of the philosophy which affects life comes to him through Wordsworth, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and Emerson. The opportunity to mould character through teaching English is immense."

And lest there be a feeling that the teaching of freshmen is somehow on a lower level of dignity, he makes it clear that "those who meet freshmen and sophomores occupy strategically the most important positions in the department. The entire course of numberless students will depend precisely on the impression that a freshman gets from his rhetoric teacher. There is no teacher who gets so good a chance to mould plastic clay so effectively as the teacher of freshmen rhetoric."

Some might think that words like these were administered to allay dissatisfaction with the routine of elementary teaching, but Sherman could point to certain of his instructors in proof of their truth. It was flattering to the powers of his listeners, to be sure, but his belief in judicious flattery as a means of drawing out the talents of young people had ample justification in psychology and experience.

With individual members of his department Sherman cultivated personal relations as much as time would allow. He had at heart the development of each one's capacities for teaching or writing. He encouraged each to find courses in which he could display his talents, showing the same interest in teachers of

business writing as in teachers of poetry. If he sometimes had to call upon a poet to give instruction in business writing, he consoled him with the prospect of the moral benefit to be derived. "I begin to think," he wrote on such an occasion, "that all poets and literary persons would profit by a year of this work."[4] He learned the strong and weak points of his instructors without having recourse to classroom visitations. That procedure he avoided because he knew that very frequently it embarrassed the teacher and prevented him from giving a good account of himself. But to attend a public reading by one of these teachers was considered an attention, and Sherman regularly availed himself of these opportunities to form an impression of the members of his department. Much could be learned also from listening, willy-nilly, to the opinions of colleagues and the voice of student rumor. When he became aware of a striking defect in a teacher, particularly if it was of a remediable kind, he would administer wholesome counsel which, while it could not be entirely painless, more often created gratitude than resentment.

He manifested a similar kind of concern for the "productive" activities of his staff. It did not matter whether it was a textbook, or one of those "learned" articles which was so alien to his own taste, or a mere book review; so long as it gave evidence of the person's interest in the subject he welcomed and encouraged it. In the most informal way, without any show of official authority and without emphasizing material motives, he made one feel the desirableness and importance, not so much of bringing "a contribution to knowledge," but of satisfying one's self-respect by the performance of some self-imposed labor. When the article finally appeared its writer might be rewarded with a note of heartening approval and with an admonition to persist in his good work, to strike in the plow and cultivate and get his harvest in betimes.

The informality and friendliness which characterized Sherman's more or less official contacts with his staff was typical of the atmosphere that ruled all his relations with the department. His home was the center of its social life. There the spirit of Mrs. Sherman, directing and dominating, imparted a bright-

[4]To Sidney Glenn, December 5, 1923.

ness and a vivacity which gave something of a gala tone even to the stated monthly teas. The third Friday afternoon of each month found the Sherman house thronged, with the hostess entertaining the men at one end with her candid, biting wit, while at the other stood the host, the center of a swarm of young women who drank in his words with wide-eyed wonder, though often at a loss to distinguish between his serious purpose and his smilingly malicious banter. There were pleasant dinner parties, among which, particularly clear in memory, are the Thanksgiving Day dinners for the celibates of the department when, the mild solemnity of the day having been honored with a reading from Governor Bradford's *History of the Plymouth Plantation*, the hours of cheerful talk and song prolonged themselves till nightfall.

But most delightful of all were the hours with Sherman in his study. After his day's work was done, which was never before nine o'clock at night, a friend might without fear of trespassing permit himself to drop in and talk shop or merely let off steam. In his little, crowded, alcove-like study Mrs. Sherman would come in to join them, and then there was no reason why the conversation should flag, even if the visitor himself did not have much to offer. Sunday evening was the time when visitors came in numbers, gathering in the living room or, after the addition to the house was built, about the fireplace of the spacious L-shaped study. The tone of these Sunday evenings has been happily described by George Whicher:

"Sunday nights in Urbana found us almost invariably at Stuart Sherman's fire. In the room where we sat books seemed to come more easily to hand than anywhere else. They lurked thickly on shelves and lay on tables to startle and waylay us. They had a way of entering into a casual bit of talk on university affairs or village gossip and diverting it to exciting issues. It might be that someone had commented with complacency on the superior intellectual response of his women students only to find himself before long listening with tingling ears to Richardson's Pamela beseeching her insufferable husband for more of his 'sweet instructions.'

"All sorts of writers played their parts in our dialogues. One evening it would be Frost, then newly published in England, or Masefield, or our neighbor Vachel Lindsay shouting

from Springfield, Ill.; another time William Cobbett or Wesley, Trollope of the *Autobiography* or Sir Thomas Browne of the *Christian Morals* would rise from the shades. As Sherman read aloud snatches calculated to provoke a matching of opinions, they were all, like his Shakespeare, our contemporaries. Before that fire our 'days among the dead' were transmuted into nights among the living."[5]

Of this aspect of the life of the department Mrs. Sherman says: "I don't know that we did anything special, but we both were tremendously interested in all the people in it, and for my part I loved to have them come to the house. I am sure there never was a more responsive group of people. Stuart did make a real effort to get people together who would be vitally interested whenever a celebrity came to town, and in getting up luncheons he always tried to include everyone he possibly could. Sometimes I feel that perhaps one secret of the pleasant feeling was that neither of us cared a snap for so-called university rank, and a gay or interesting assistant was just as welcome a guest to us as the fullest professor. I used to hear the other wives—some of them—complain of having to entertain their departments, but for me it was never anything else but a pleasure."

The most difficult and delicate part of the duty of a department head is to satisfy the just claims of his colleagues, and in attempting to do it to remain on a perfectly amicable footing with the dean of the college. The question of salaries is a source of perpetual vexations, sometimes petty in character, sometimes quite grave. A dean generally regards it as his function to resist recommendations for increases until the pressure becomes irresistible. Sherman, who never had to ask a raise for himself, found it irksome to apply the pressure. He was ready to give weight to the reasons of the administration, but what seemed an entirely adequate reason to the officials was not always persuasive to the half-starved instructor. To a department head it was rather troublesome, as Sherman pointed out to the dean, to have a dozen men at twelve hundred dollars who were worth two thousand or twenty-five hundred in another place.[6]

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[5] "Among His Books," "Books," September 26, 1926.

[6] Letter to K. C. Babcock, September 4, 1917.

His staff, he complained a few years later, was dropping off right and left to the lure of doubled salaries: "When I get a plain useful assistant, they offer him a title in the Registrar's office, without so much as saying by your leave. And I have been so confoundedly humanized, that I send the Registrar a letter of recommendation and the deserter a godspeed."[7] But annoyance did not show itself unless his urgent recommendations were disregarded without some very good reason being given. In the case of what he thought was a deliberate slight to an indispensable member of the department he expressed emphatically to the dean his desire to get the matter adjusted promptly, adding, "I feel keenly about this matter. To make us struggle for every half inch of recognition that we get for this member of the department is of course a constant reflection upon our own judgment, which is growing quite painful to me."[8] It was about this time that in talking with the president about an offer he had received from another university he declared that the only request he had to make was a fair consideration of his proposals for the department and that any denial be accompanied by a statement of the grounds for the denial.

Sherman was not himself a stickler for punctilio, but he respected the rules laid down in the official announcements. When taken to task once by the assistant dean for a trifling departure from the letter of a rule he sat down and wrote with his own hand, the department stenographer being too busy, four sheets of fine script in justification of what he had done, concluding as follows: "Meanwhile, I hope that you will not think we look upon the prerequisites in this department with cynical levity, or that in our treatment of them we are actuated by any childish appetite for miscellaneous recruits in English courses. The problem strikes me as really somewhat complex and difficult. I have tried to adjust rules to individual cases with conscience and reason. If you can give me any suggestions which will increase these elements I shall be most happy to receive them."

When the breach of regularity was on the other side Sherman did not make a great fuss, but he sometime took a mischievous

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[7]Letter to K. C. Babcock, August 14, 1920.

[8]*To the Same*, June 8, 1922.

pleasure in driving the moral home to his superior officers, as in the case involved in the following letter:

(*To Dean Babcock*)

Manistee, Michigan,
August 14, 1920.

Dear Dean Babcock:

I enclose a letter from Mr. —— —— recommending himself and his course in Publicity Methods to the Department of English. His letter informs me that the president and Professor Harrington have approved and that he takes it for granted that I will do likewise.

This reminds me of a passage in Boswell: "Not very long after the institution of our Club, Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. 'I like it much, (said he), I think I shall be of you.' When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr. Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. 'He'll be of us (said Johnson), how does he know we'll *permit* him. The first Duke in England has no right to hold such language.'"

I don't know Mr. —— or whether he has had a highschool education—not officially. I have only his word for it that anyone approves of him! I think his procedure irregular in every respect. I dislike the accumulation in the department of these needless "practical" courses in journalism. I mean "needless" from an educational point of view. But I suppose that this course will not do a *great deal* of educational harm, and that there are good practical reasons for putting it in. Therefore, if you approve, I am willing to accept personal responsibility for it.

Boswell continues as follows: "However, when Garrick was regularly proposed some time afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken a momentary offence at his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him, and he was accordingly elected, was a most agreeable member, and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death."

You see that the study of letters has a humanizing influence upon character.

Very sincerely yours,
Stuart P. Sherman.

P. S. Boswell was a Scotchman and the President relishes Scotch letters. I hope you will give him an opportunity to enjoy the passage which I have quoted from his countryman's immortal work.

It was in this good-humored and tactful tone that Sherman generally conveyed his criticisms and protests to the administration, preserving all friendliness in the process. It might be only to remonstrate unavailingly about the noises of the brass band booming directly underneath his office, or, more successfully, to beg chairs and a reading desk for a classroom, a favor that is acknowledged "with gratitude welling *ex imo pectore*" and a tribute to the "driving efficiency" of the dean's representations. Dean Babcock must have read, too, with a smile full of understanding, the letter from California, where Sherman was teaching in the Summer Session: "I went into the administrative office this P. M. to see what my duties were to be on Monday and what rules were to be observed. The languid assistant director tells me that I may examine my pupils or not, as I please, keep office hours or not, as I please; etc., etc., etc.,—all *ad lib.*—till I thought perhaps I might go to the seashore and merely cash my salary checks, and yet fulfill all of my function that is really required."[9] Returning from delivering two William Vaughn Moody lectures at the University of Chicago he reports to the dean, "for the benefit of our own Committee on Lectures," that he had been offered a hundred dollars apiece for the lectures and had been paid three hundred dollars for the two, that he had been kept in town only a day and a half and had not been asked to give *five additional lectures* here and there about the university, had been entertained at three luncheons and dinners and allowed some leisure to make the acquaintance of their lions. "In our treatment of visiting lecturers," he concluded, "it seems to me that we rather over-stress the second element in the university's motto: Learning and *Labor*."[10]

As one of the responsible and influential men on the campus he occasionally, but by no means often, intervened in a matter of general university concern. There is a special interest in the

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[9]June 16, 1921.
[10]May 18, 1922.

letter that he wrote urging upon the authorities the importance of retaining the services of Professor E. B. Greene, when the latter was invited to Columbia, because the factors that he here stresses had no little bearing on his own resignation from the university a year and a half later.

(*To Dean Babcock*)

December 19, 1922.

Dear Dean Babcock:

Saturday night Professor Greene told me of his call to Columbia, incidentally remarking that he had told no one else but you and the President, and asking me not to divulge the matter. I have kept his confidence, but without violating it I think I may venture to send you a thought on the subject, and I should be very glad to have you show this letter to the President.

I take it for granted that those who deal with this case are perfectly well acquainted—are quite as well acquainted as I am —with the value of Professor Greene's scholarship, character and eminent public spirit, to his colleagues in personal relations, to his department, to the college, to the university, to the community, to the historical profession, and to the country. The call itself indicates adequately enough that he is regarded elsewhere as one of the best men in the United States. I have always thought he was and I think the impression is too general to require emphasis.

But I am not quite sure that everyone knows as well as I do the breadth and intensity of Greene's scholarly interests, nor the kind of passion that he has felt these last years for turning his whole strength to teaching and to productive scholarship. I know well enough that he felt this same passion years ago, and that he repressed it, and repeatedly felt obliged to repress it in response to one summons after another calling for the devotion of his time and strength to various forms of public service and administrative tasks. But since the war, and since his resignation of the department chairmanship, he has released his passion and he has got into full swing with his work as a scholar. He is deeply engrossed at the present time in his

study of our relations with the Orient, and I know that he is very keen to push that forward.

Now I am going to say freely what I should do, if it were in my power, to keep him here.

I should first promptly and fully meet the Columbia offer, and put him unmistakably in the front rank of our professors, so far as money compensation is concerned. It strikes me that this is due to him on his merits at the present time; and far more than due for nearly twenty-eight years of back pay.

But this itself, I believe, would not influence or affect him so much as another thing: that would be for you and the president explicitly to recognize that he has served out his term at administration and odd jobs, and to insist on putting him in a small class of men who are to hold their places and honors and salaries for their merits as scholars. This would mean that you really insist, as if you meant it, upon his keeping out of jobs, that you insist on reduction of his teaching schedule, and that you provide him with ample help, stenographic and class-room assistance—and so give him a real chance to realize his own powers as a productive scholar. I can't think of a man in the university who so fully deserves that kind of reward; and I have a kind of "hunch" that if he did leave us, it would be because he felt that our university does not contrive that sort of reward for anybody. This, as I say, is just my own private imagining, but I suspect there is something in it.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE ARENA

(1920–1922)

A SINGLE theme dominates nearly all of Sherman's writing between 1920 and 1922. The emphasis on democracy which was characteristic of the years immediately preceding becomes subordinate to the exploration of the general American tradition and to the examination in particular of the Puritan strain in American character and culture. Although a casual glance at the list of his essays in this period might give an impression of scattering interest, a closer view reveals that only his articles on Disraeli and, to a less degree, on the correspondence between George Sand and Flaubert fall outside the scope of his theme. From the numerous opportunities for publication which, in spite of his complaint that he was without a medium, were thrust upon him, he carefully selected those which enabled him to widen or deepen his study of American character and American ideals. Thus when a suggestion came from Carl Van Doren that he write an essay on Andrew Carnegie his first impulse was to say, "No." Then he sat down and, collecting his thoughts in a two-page outline, decided that Carnegie was too much of a power and a figure to be overlooked, and that he would constitute a distinctive addition to a volume of representative Americans. "But," he added, "don't send me any more miscellaneous books, please; for I can't get to them."[1] In apologizing to Professor Firkins for not reviewing his *Jane Austen* he gave as one of his principal excuses his resolution to quit writing book notices and to save his time for longer pieces of work. "It is months," he explained, "since I have written a book review for anybody. To illustrate the completeness of the cessation, I have now More's last book of essays, which I did agree last spring to review as a special sort of

[1]October 9, 1920.

obligation that I owed to More, but I haven't paid it yet. Your book I never undertook, except to myself, to review; never exchanged any word with the editor about it; and received it indirectly after I had said: 'Send no more.'" A further reason that he gives in this instance is of intrinsic interest for his approach to an artist's work. "I enjoyed your close remorseless scrutiny of Jane's realism," he said, "as a piece of scrupulous dissection, but your steady reference of her 'poetry' to a standard of objective reality 'sort of' exasperated me—seemed to me steadily to miss her point, and to leave untouched, almost unmentioned, the life of her imagination. It was an admirably skilful and interesting evasion. I discovered no 'peccancies' in the way you eluded what in Jane delights me. It was just that the entire conception of your critical tribunal struck me as a mistake. Now if I had been reviewing in those days, that would not have prevented me from discussing the book. But since I was not reviewing, it acted as an additional silencer."[2]

The determination to get away from miscellaneous reviewing, never perfectly achieved by Sherman, was bound up with a growing desire for a more personal form of expression. When Mr. H. S. Canby, having come to the editorship of the "Literary Review" of the *Evening Post*, proposed to him some ideas for a contribution to his paper, Sherman made open confession of his desire. "For some time," he wrote, "I have 'sort of' hankered to pull out an essay-stop which is somewhere in my melodeon. But nearly everything I have done for years has set out under the flag and pretext of a review. I hanker for the freedom of the 'informal essay' and particularly for the 'personality' of it, as allowing an expression of 'suppressed desires'; and flatter myself that once the outlet is found, I might produce like a flowing well. This may be all smoke and illusion. But you see, you have one attribute of the *creative editor:* You induce confidences."[3] He expressed himself again to this purpose in a letter to Mr. Ellery Sedgwick: "I have long felt a desire to develop a somewhat different style than these [weekly 'organs of opinion'] foster—something less journalistic; more, in a certain sense, personal; with more undertones and overtones; utilizing more of one's experience, feeling, etc. Since you are

[2]October, 1921.

[3]Summer, 1920.

an editor, presumably in search of undiscovered material, I will admit to you my suspicion that an ingenious editor could probably get something better out of me eventually than a journalistic 'article.'"[4]

The connection with Mr. Sedgwick which began in this year proved a very fruitful one. Not since Mr. More had left the *Nation* had Sherman found an editor for whose character and judgment he had so much respect. In their outlook on the American scene the two men saw almost eye to eye. Both were in sympathy with democratic forces and both desired to preserve an aristocratic principle of taste within the democracy. Sherman soon was made to realize that the *Atlantic Monthly* was precisely the organ he had been looking for. The flowing well to which he had alluded in his letter to Mr. Canby began to produce, and under the new editorial stimulus he unfolded features of his personality which had not previously found their way into his writing. The emotional richness and the poetry of the "Cornelia" papers owe much to the encouragement of Mr. Sedgwick. The bonds of sympathy between the two men were greatly strengthened by personal meetings. On the occasion of Mr. Sedgwick's first visit to Urbana, in the fall of 1921, Sherman was impressed by certain reserves of feeling in him, by an interior "skeptical, pessimistic, beneath his purposefulness, his participation, his gusto." It was clearly a temperament of decided affinities with his own, and in their relations there were the elements of an enduring friendship. "For Stuart Sherman," Mr. Sedgwick wrote after his death, "my admiration was almost from the first mixed with affection. I enjoyed his whimsies, and his prejudices bound me tight to him, while for his great qualities I felt a respect which no one of his critical generation drew from me."[5] Of the letters that passed between them he said: "They will never record the feeling of our association. To me, he was one of the most stimulating of men, and I used to play with the idea of some day turning the *Atlantic* over to him."[6]

As far back as the winter of 1916 Mr. Sedgwick had tried to enlist Sherman for the *Atlantic*. He had thought of him then as

[4]September 16, 1920.

[5]"Books," September 26, 1926.

[6]Letter to J. Zeitlin, January 4, 1928.

a brilliant spokesman of conservatism who was competent to make head against the rising tide of "vulgarity" in the American democracy. The advancing democracy which, he was careful to state, he hailed with delight in politics and in society, was, he thought, at death grips with the aristocratic idea in art and literature through which great artists have accomplished their great work. Nothing came of that suggestion at the moment, but when Mr. Sedgwick read the essay on "Mr. Mencken and the Jeune Fille," the original idea recurred to his mind in a somewhat modified form, and he wrote to Sherman again, proposing the question of "current American taste as largely the product of the imported Americans, who have for so many years been at work diluting the original Puritan strain."[7] The reply which Sherman made is of the greatest significance in defining the breadth and wisdom with which he viewed the problem, and is by itself a sufficient refutation of the bigotry with which it was still customary to charge him.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
April 28, 1920.

DEAR MR. SEDGWICK:

My memory may be at fault, but I don't recall any hardened and inveterate habit I have of resisting your invitations to the fold. Perhaps I was a little afraid of the topic you suggested three or four years ago—"The New Vulgarity," or some such matter. The one which you now propose is obviously related to it, and it is perhaps equally dangerous and equally tempting.

There can be no doubt that the dilution of the old stock with wave after wave of immigration from new quarters is profoundly altering the complexion and taste of this generation, in ways which could be more or less clearly indicated. In the paragraphs of the Mencken review to which you refer I attempted a brief sketch of the scene. As a result I heard there was wrath among the young Scandinavians, Germans, Jews, etc., who now furnish so much of our current literature.

They, however, missed my point. I do not feel a particle of

[7]April 20, 1920.

sympathy with some of your *Atlantic* writers who exclaim: "Let us of the antique New England blood shake off dull sloth and assert our superiority and stick close together, and shut out the swine!" I consider this the gesture of a futile snobocracy—a gesture impotent and mischievous. The miscellaneous new nation has arrived, and its large untrained voice is certain to be the main instrument for music or noise in our literature. The only question is, who is to be the singing-master? If your masters of the "Puritan" line persistently elevate their eyebrows and draw aside to a holy aloofness, the Monster, with ever grosser and grosser voice, will roar them down. If, on the other hand, the traditional leaders can develop a little cordiality and a great deal of catholicity and patience, I think they may still hold their places, many of them, and exert a greater influence than ever before. But they can't hold their places by sitting still. Their Puritanism will have to lay off its frock coat and put on its khaki.

I am every day astonished and dismayed at the failure of the intellectual "old guard" to recognize and adjust itself to the undeniable shift of power; and at the pettiness of their self-satisfaction and at the peril of their open contempt for the new inundating many.

If you are interested in the development of this general vein, I may be able to make it flow in the course of the summer or early fall. I don't intend to be lured by any kind of bait into the now popular recreation of kicking at the "masses" and crying up the "saving remnant." I respect the latter group only when it is going about its business, which is *saving*.

Social solidarity versus social secession is a very pretty theme for a summer's meditation.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

P. S. You don't by any chance want an article of this sort apropos of the works of Mrs. K. F. Gerould, do you? I could promise you one of considerable point. I suggest this because my friend Fuller of the *Review* has just declined to print one of the liveliest I have written—I think because he is so thoroughly committed to "social secession," and tied up with reaction. I believe that one or two, at least, of the most pro-

voking of Mrs. Gerould's essays appeared in the *Atlantic*. If you took me in, you should be sure that sparks would fly. But if you are willing to represent another point of view or tone and temper with respect to *Modes and Morals*, I could mold and mellow this article into a rather decent little explosive.

S. P. S.

With the attitude of this letter Mr. Sedgwick expressed his general agreement. The essay that came out of the discussion was, as Sherman explained in forwarding it, "in the vein, but not precisely, or not quite *overtly* rather, on the subject. I have really presented my notion of the way our non-'Anglo-Saxon' element is affecting and threatening to affect our literature. But I have only here and there indicated the 'alien' element. Of course I recognize, as I suppose everyone does, that there are innumerable non-Anglo-Saxons who are quite as fully in sympathy with our best traditions as the natives. At the same time, I think it true that the *spiritually* alien strain in our recent literature is largely ascribable to the later importations of European blood and culture."[8] On receiving the article Mr. Sedgwick expressed his delight, in spite of the fact that it came in handwritten form, saying, "It is full of sense and sincerity and right thinking, and a feeling for standards which I am forever trying to inculcate through the *Atlantic* pages—always trying and seldom succeeding. Truly a noble discourse, I call it, and one which I am delighted to have."[9] He also asked for an extension of the idea into another article, to which Sherman replied as follows: "At the present moment I don't see the way to extend what I have said about the foreign influence except by the collection of *facts*. The nature and tendency of the influence, I have already indicated. The facts are extremely hard to come at. I don't feel sufficiently in possession of them now to write the solid sort of article that the subject demands, and I don't know how long it will be before I have leisure to collect them."[10] The selection of a title for the essay gave a good deal of trouble. Mr. Sedgwick objected to the use of the word "intelligentsia" in connection with it because in discussions

[8]August 16, 1920.

[9]August 25, 1920.

[10]September 16, 1920.

of Americanism it raised a cloud of dust and prejudice and had "the effect of a moderate catalepsy upon conservative readers." He proposed "The Young Democracy and the National Genius" instead. To this Sherman demurred because, he said, "these people that I am considering under the name of 'intelligentsia' are such *bad* democrats. Many of them are not really democrats at all. They are eminently people without political sense. In the extreme cases they seem to me to lack political, social, and moral sense—in the broader meaning of the last word. They pride themselves on renouncing allegiance to all sense but the æsthetic sense. The word 'intelligentsia' therefore appealed to me precisely because of its rather foreign and undemocratic suggestion."[11] Sherman proposed a number of alternatives and after some further discussion the essay finally appeared in the issue for January, 1921, with the title of "The National Genius."

In its gist "The National Genius" is a vindication for the fine arts of a vital function in a healthy democratic society. The argument is based on the assumption that great art expresses the dominant thought and feeling of the society in which it is produced, and on that assumption it treats with a liberal infusion of irony the upholders of a purely æsthetic point of view which divorces the function of art from the function of "truth, morals, and democracy," and those who ignore the existence of a powerful national tradition and allow themselves to be misled by "alien-spirited" guides. The reality of this tradition Sherman establishes not only through reference to its exponents but by the mouths of those who speak scornfully of it. If it is acknowledged that Puritanism is a distinctive characteristic of the American nation, where, he would ask, is the error of maintaining that it is the task of the artist, "not to set Beauty and Puritanism at loggerheads, but to make Puritanism beautiful?"

In an article in the *Bookman* for October, 1920—"Is There Anything to Be Said for Literary Tradition"—provoked by Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn's *A Book of Modern Criticism*, Sherman had already presented a substantially similar argument and had charged the impressionism and formlessness of the younger writers to their lack of ties with anything that

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[11]October 19, 1920.

gave some promise of outlasting time—"some national ideal, some religious faith, some permanent human experience, some endless human quest." He had then pointedly asked to what extent the secession from the American past was "due to the conduct of the movement by writers whose blood and breeding are as hostile to the English strain as a cat to water' and had proceeded to address himself directly to Mr. Lewisohn and "the group of shivering young Davids" (to wit, James Huneker, Mr. Spingarn, Mr. Mencken, Mr. Lewisohn, Mr. Hackett, Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, and Randolph Bourne) chosen by him to face "an army of Goliaths." The critics in this group, he observed, with something of irritated hostility in his voice, could not be expected to connect themselves vitally with the American line or to receive and carry on its tradition, and therefore they were "restless impressionists, almost destitute of doctrine, and with no discoverable unifying tendency except to let themselves out into a homeless happy land where they may enjoy the 'colorful' cosmic weather." Moreover, he cried out against the "purring insincerity" of Mr. Lewisohn's protestation of sympathy with life "in every manifestation" and of his desire "neither to judge nor to condemn." "Shall we infer," he asks, "that he sympathizes with the Goliaths, that he does not condemn them, even while he goes out to slay them?" That to him is but another sign of bewildered impressionism, in depressing contrast with the selective sympathies which have governed the development of American life.

The acrimonious element in this attack was in response to the clearly implied challenge of Mr. Lewisohn's book which had significantly omitted all the representatives of the "conservative" group from among the "modern" critics. "I do not desire any complete assent," Sherman wrote to Carl Van Doren.[12] "Your colleague Lewisohn, on the other hand, clearly desires to send the 'Puritan' group all straight to the most oblivious pit in hell. To that treatment one is of course obliged to retort

[12]Carl and Mark Van Doren had written a joint review of Mr. Lewisohn's book (*Nation*, August 21, 1920) which Sherman characterized as "a skilful piece of mediation." They had expressed their regret at the omission of Mr. More and Sherman, saying they "have invoked tradition and common sense perhaps indefensibly, but they have invoked them powerfully."

with suitable measures."[13] Sherman was only too ready for a fight on this issue. Unfortunately his loss of temper gave some color to the charges of racial prejudice and intolerance which had often been made against him and which was renewed with much vigor in the heated discussion that followed on the publication of this article and "The National Genius." It is possible, however, to prove the injustice of this charge.

Soon after the appearance of this essay, Mr. Lewisohn published in the *Nation* an article on "Tradition and Freedom"[14] which, in a suave and velvety style, without alluding to Sherman by name, aimed to expose the weakness of the "traditionalist's" character. The traditionalist is represented as one who believes only the familiar to be beautiful and only the customary to be true, who can sustain the harmony of his inner life only by vast exclusions, who, fearing for his inner security, becomes petulant and bitter, who excludes from his consciousness the sordidness and tyranny of the State, who at crucial historic moments succumbs to the shame of hatred and intolerance, who fixes his vision upon a beautiful campus or stately ceremonial and will not yield to the aching consciousness of slum and trench, who "lives in an ideal realm of images and values where the disastrous cries of the world cannot reach him, and the speech of those who seek a contact with the wild totality of things sounds harsh and strident to his ear." Such a person, the article goes on, might use the names of Emerson and Whitman and Mark Twain, but only in a decorative fashion, for his heart is elsewhere, with ancestral, not with insurgent voices, thinking of Puritanism, but not in its heroic moment, when Puritanism, too, was a free liberation and revolt. And in conclusion the article appeals insinuatingly to the "nobler" of the conservative critics to aid the liberals in the difficult task of bringing light to "a slothful and intolerant world," complaining "that spirits caught in a web of their own emotion should join powers with whom they have in reality nothing in common, and cast the first stone."

A marked copy of the *Nation* containing this essay was sent to Sherman by Mr. Lewisohn along with a letter protesting

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[13]October 9, 1920.

[14]December 8, 1920; reprinted in *The Creative Life*, 1924, pp. 85–90.

against the charge of insincerity and his hostility to Jews. Sherman replied on both of these points.

(*To Ludwig Lewisohn*)

University Club, Urbana, Illinois,
December 13, 1920.

DEAR MR. LEWISOHN:

I had read your *Nation* article on the Traditionalist before you called attention to it, and thought it both adroit and delicate. Even with your assistance, however, I fail to recognize myself as the subject of it.

With regard to your comments on my *Bookman* article, I cannot help thinking that the "insincerity" is perfectly obvious. Universal sympathy is beyond the reach of God or devil, to say nothing of man, who, as soon as he professes that impossible affection, stultifies himself by going out to destroy all those who don't profess it. As long as human nature lasts, the anarchist, in spite of his professions, will really yearn to govern, and "reigns of Terror" will be the natural outcome of attempts to enforce reigns of brotherly love.

I think also that you are probably mistaken in your interpretation of my use of the Jewish element in your group of critics. I have no "hostility" to the Jews as such, no "racial prejudice." I have invited several into the department here, and am very fond of more than one. But all that should not, according to your own principles, prevent one from seeing and stating the relationship between the character of the critical movement in which you, for example, are interested and the racial sympathies and proclivities of other members of the group.

If your group does not feel the traditional emotion which, in my opinion, the critical leaders of American literature should feel, then it seems to me entirely legitimate and pertinent to offer an explanation of the absence in your group of the signs of that "traditional emotion."

If, as you seem to feel, the absence of "traditional emotion" is not a deficiency at all, but on the contrary an advantage, a proof of higher civilization, why then my reference to the

Jewish element in your group is manifestly a tribute to the Jews. From your point of view, how can it be anything else?

Your universal sympathy has got you into difficulties again. You are trying in vain to "sympathize" at the same time with me, who still value "traditional emotion" and with your own group, which regards "traditional emotion" as a noble thing gone down to irretrievable ruin. You will have to make a choice.[15]

Since these outcries of "intolerance" came to be heard so frequently in the controversy, it is well at this point to present a fuller statement of Sherman's attitude toward the "alien" elements in the American population, particularly the Jews. If there was anything like an instinctive antipathy toward them in his breast, it was held under splendid control. There is much more evidence of a sympathetic interest in what these people were bringing to America, and of scrupulous fairness in the intellectual appraisal of their qualities. To be sure America was the standard by which he judged their contribution, but it was not a narrow and prejudiced America. In the course of a review of Mary Antin's *The Promised Land*[16] he remarked that while the thoughts of our legislators were troubled by what the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers ought to do for the destitute, illiterate multitudes cast upon our shores, "some of these men and women have already turned the tables, and find something to do for the offspring of the Pilgrim Fathers. To the anxious and skeptical among us they are proving our own opportunities and powers, pointing out the path of peace among racial antipathies, and strengthening our somewhat languid faith in our own democratic institutions." There is no lack of friendliness in this expression, and nothing less flattering than envy in a review of a somewhat later date in which he said:

"To many observers it is beginning to appear that the open, restless, curious, inquiring, penetrating mind of modern times is the Jewish mind; and the descendants of men who came over in the *Mayflower* may not infrequently be heard asking uneasily how long it will be before the Jews are doing the thinking for

[15]This letter is reproduced from an incomplete manuscript draft found among Sherman's papers.

[16]*Nation*, May 23, 1912.

the country. When the day comes we shall have a new pair of terms: Hebraism for the lovers of light, and Yankeeism for those who clamor for action and chant with set faces, 'Right or wrong, my country.'"[17] The only direct rebuke of Jews, as such, in all his writings is for reasons quite opposed to bigotry. Those who believe that it was Sherman's cherished wish to subject all who entered this country to a strict spiritual conformity with native ideals would do well to read his review of a book by a Jewish woman who prided herself on having become completely indistinguishable from her environment. "The completeness of her break with the Ghetto," he said, "left some precious things behind. All that she carried away was the ancestral candlesticks and copper fishpot which now serves for holding autumn leaves. Some things that remain in her father's house would equally enrich an American home—polished a bit, to be sure, like the fishpot, and set in a good light: her father's fear of the Eternal, his reverence for the Law, her mother's humility and quick charity, the characteristic Jewish fidelity to family and kinsfolk."[18]

In view of the attitude and temper revealed in these passages, it was nothing short of stupid and fantastic, if not deliberately malignant, to describe Sherman as coiling himself and his conception of national culture right into the heart of the Stars and Stripes and trying to enforce "that particularist Americanism which in its essence requires exclusion, ill-will, pride and prejudice—Anti-Semitism, Anti-Germanism, Anti-Irishism, Anti-Russianism, Anti-everything else." That was the manner in which the *New Republic*[19] greeted his essay on "The National Genius," adding more in the same taste. The worst that could possibly be said about Sherman was that in the heat of battle he did not guard with sufficient care against a tone or an insinuation that could be perverted or exaggerated beyond all recognition by unfriendly or unscrupulous critics. But in the end it was he much more than any of his opponents who had reason to complain of intolerance and unfairness.

This unfairness was particularly evident in the treatment

[17]Review of John Erskine's *The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent*, *Nation*, July 20, 1916.

[18]E. G. Stern's *My Mother and I*, *Nation*, August 30, 1917.

[19]February 9, 1921.

that was accorded to his argument that literature had to be integrated with the various interests of life—a position to which in the end every serious critic is bound to give his assent, and which is supported by the words of Mr. Lewisohn, Mr. Spingarn, Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, and at times even by the words of Mr. Mencken. Mr. Lewisohn, indeed, uses such language as, if it had come from Sherman's lips, would have moved the superior scorn of every self-satisfied upholder of "pure" art. "I care less and less," Mr. Lewisohn can say, "for art in its more abstract forms and more and more for life. . . . It is the remediable moral suffering in the world that crowds my vision. . . . The greatest art has always sought to lessen the evils that are under the sun. . . . Shall I be a fairly accomplished æsthete or a pamphleteer? A pamphleteer, by all means. Even a pamphleteer needn't write ill."[20] But a suggestion from Sherman that art must work in the service of truth was interpreted to mean that he was concerned for "the custom of the Philistines."[21] The process of dragging down the meaning to a level where one feels free to tread on it is ludicrously exemplified by a writer who explained that Sherman contended "that beauty is, and must be, concerned with truth, morals and democracy; identifying the function of art, *as it is to be hoped he did not intend to*, with that of ethical or political instruction, and asserting that all art is unimportant and ignoble apart from this service." But this hope that Sherman did not intend it does not prevent this charitable commentator from definitely ascribing that intention to him and asserting categorically in the next breath that Sherman "conceives criticism, as he conceives art, to be an accessory form of moral instruction."[22] It is an extremely simple way of winning a victory.

Not all of his antagonists, however, were equally shifty. In a direct reply to the *Atlantic* essay Mr. Harold Stearns,[23] after stating his agreement with the general thesis of the relation of the artist to society, took issue with Sherman on the reality

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[20] *The Creative Life*, pp. 14–15.

[21] "Professor Sherman's Tradition," *Freeman*, October 27, 1920.

[22] Lloyd Morris: "Skirmishes on the Frontier of American Criticism," N. Y. *Times* "Book Review," February 10, 1924.

[23] "America and the Young Intellectual," *Bookman*, March, 1921.

of the "moral idealism" of the American people and on his understanding of the spirit of the young intellectuals. Moral idealism, he asserted, was precisely what the young intellectuals were looking for and could not find in any manifestation of American life, and their revolt was against a civilization which hampered them in the free pursuit of truth. In that pursuit they were deserted, he complained, by "even the intelligent and tolerant" because of a "fear that an honest attempt to understand [their] point of view might make them deeply uncomfortable and dissatisfied." He also declared that the genuine national culture was "one of almost belligerent individualism," though he weakened the force of the belligerency by stating at the close his own intention to leave America and go to a land where he could spiritually draw breath.

This article Sherman thought deserved an answer as at least being an attempt to meet his thesis in contrast with the evasions of his other critics. "I am digesting," he wrote to Mr. Sedgwick, "all these evidences of irritation and planning as soon as possible to carry the war into the enemy's country. But I am more anxious to strike hard and straight than to strike quickly. Also, I wish to make my next offering to you carry on the argument started in the first."[24] In a little more than a month he carried out his plan and forwarded his essay to the *Atlantic Monthly* with a covering letter of explanation.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
April 9, 1921.

Dear Mr. Sedgwick:

I sent you yesterday my discourse "What Is a Puritan?" which I'm rather afraid you will think looks more like a pamphlet than an article. It connects very closely with the "National Genius," and is a very necessary step in the development of the projected book. It attempts to perform these three things: (1) to disperse some of the slander that has accumulated about the name and reputation of historical Puritans; (2) to

[24]March 3, 1921.

freshen recollection of the common genial human side of some eminent historical Puritans; (3) to define the living and progressive spirit of the Puritan and to illustrate its operations at various periods. The final object is to wrest from the hands of unsocial "immoralist" radicals the credit for being the moving and adventurous intellectual force of the times. So far as my own critical program is concerned there is nothing so important just now as proving that I am not in complicity with death, standpattism, and reaction. And this article is intended to present the basis in universal human nature of a truly progressive impulse—an impulse which I think the "emancipated" modern mind might accept as, in the essential sense of the word, religious, that is, binding together the various functions of life and bringing them into harmony by relating them all to a vision of perfected human nature.

Whether I have myself performed this task persuasively or not, I am very keen to see it performed; for I think it must precede any important popular discussions of the "function of criticism" in literary and other artistic fields. . . .

In the course of this paper Sherman paid his respects to the various individuals who had fallen foul of him, and the effect of it did not commend itself to Mr. Sedgwick. He returned the essay with a request to have the personalities removed. "The theme," he said, "is so interesting, and your treatment of it so vigorous that I could wish away all those parts of the manuscript which seem to detract both from its dignity and from the persuasiveness of your argument. The 'little dogs and all'—after all, what does their yapping matter? If you wish to allude to them at all, you can do so in a single off-hand sentence, but to get down into the arena with them seems to me a serious mistake. In saying this, I am, of course, very frank, but I like your work too well and respect you too much to make my suggestion in the circumspect editorial manner of which precedent approves."[25]

On this matter of getting down into the arena Sherman had his own very positive opinions and he stated them forcibly in his interesting answer to Mr. Sedgwick.

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[25]April 22, 1921.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
April 25, 1921.

DEAR MR. SEDGWICK:

I am so innocent of the subtler implications of what you call the "circumspect editorial manner" that I am not perfectly sure you expected or desired to see this manuscript again. With the processes of my simple untutored mind, however, I reached the conclusion that with the suggested excisions performed you were ready at least to take it again under consideration. And I thought you were obliging to give me this criticism.

I have cut off the head of the article and cut out almost all the other personal references. What remains—a reference to Mr. Brooks Adams and Robert Herrick—you are at liberty to remove, also, if you choose. With a few other cuts, I have removed about five pages. If you want to cut off the tail, also, strike out everything after "contemporary Adamite" on page 30—from there to the end. I ought to say that I have used the substance of those paragraphs from "contemporary Adamite" to the end in the introduction to a volume of Emerson, which is now in press—a book for school use. I think they are nice paragraphs and amplify and round out the idea of the relation between Puritanism and the modern spirit. But they can be removed without bleeding the creature, if removal is necessary.

And now a word as to those "personalities." I cut them out cheerfully enough, because they could be removed without destroying the article, and because I have great confidence in your judgment. But just by way of explanation, I feel the need of saying that I put them in very deliberately, feeling that the interest and pertinence of what follows depended upon establishing clearly the situation. Now, these people that you refer to as "little dogs and all" I have no very high conceit of. But they are actually being read very widely by students, young people, and young writers. They are furnishing the young writers in considerable measure with their general ideas and critical opinions; and they are thought to be in touch with current production. I think that they are actually doing a great deal towards forming the mind of the younger generation.

They attack the older, more conservative, "academic" group right and left, personally, vehemently, week after week. The more dignified of the elder group stand quietly on their dignity; and as a consequence they are even less regarded than as if they were dead. The public which really loves an attack, applauds every time that the young people belabour one of the elder worthies; and hearing no pleasing tumult of counter-attack but only a dignified silence—read nothing but the yapping of the little dogs.

I notice that a Victorian friend of mine, Matthew Arnold, is quoted in the reviews as often as any living critic, with the possible exception of Mr. Mencken! Well, he was quoted—I mean the ideas that he sought to propagate were quoted—very widely in his own lifetime, quoted in places where they would affect the forming mind of the time. His currency was of course due to many rare talents; but it was certainly due in part, also, to his readiness to engage in literary controversy, to make literary criticism vivacious with personality, to indulge his audience in the satisfaction of witnessing a considerable amount of pretty pointed raillery—very gentlemanly raillery, never angry, or abusive, yet often very deadly to the enemy.

The *Atlantic* has not fostered that sort of thing. To its audience in the old days, the policy would have been shocking. So long as the *Atlantic* remained a "repository" for the essays of the already redeemed, personality, satire, and raillery would have been as unsuitable, to quote Mark Twain, "as a barkeeper in the kingdom of heaven." But now that you have reached out to thousands of the ungodly, and are making your pages a national forum and a confessional for publicans and sinners and cracksmen, why hesitate to stage a gladiatorial show?

Believe me, I am not arguing but merely enquiring. I am absolutely sincere in saying that I really trust your judgment rather than my own in this matter. I knew perfectly well before I sent in the article that it departed from your policy. Perhaps I was a little inspired to depart by your poking me up with those things of Stearns, etc.

I don't think you are "intolerant" at all but on the contrary extraordinarily pleasant. And since you have been so hospitable to my offerings I am anxious to remove their vices and make them as acceptable as possible. If "Literature and the Govt.

of Men" suits me, I shall be very happy to try whether it will suit you.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Of the several objects which Sherman set himself in "What Is a Puritan?," the attempt "to disperse the slander that had accumulated about the name" and to bring into the light the genial human side of certain eminent Puritans was probably the least important. Professor G. H. Palmer, whose article on "The Puritan Home" was aimed at the same mark, wrote to him that he had accomplished this object unanswerably, sweeping the reader onward by his superb style and "obliging him to feel that he was in the company of one more cultivated than he had ever imagined a defender of Puritanism to be."[26] Such facts as Sherman brought together are certainly valuable as a corrective to an intensely one-sided conception of the Puritan character; they hardly justify a complete reversal of judgment. That would be a work beyond the scope of a magazine article. The more significant aim was to give a definition to Puritanism which would identify it with the liberating forces of the spirit, with the impulses which are endlessly engaged in the quest of human perfection. Sherman was incited to attempt this by the claim of Mr. Lewisohn and Mr. Stearns to be the standard bearers of intellectual insurgency, the spokesmen of "belligerent individualism." In asserting this as the virtue of historic Puritanism he was in reality establishing a common ground for himself and his opponents to camp on. Had not Mr. Lewisohn himself said that in its heroic moment Puritanism, too, was a force of liberation and revolt? Under any circumstances, if the two sides agreed as to the values that were involved, it was a matter of relatively small moment whether they drew their support from one authority or another. Sherman was pouring a new meaning into the word Puritanism, revitalizing it to do service for the needs of his own day. The device had a certain controversial potency.

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[26]September 18, 1921. "It is agreeable to please that bland and sweet old philosopher." S. P. S. to Ellery Sedgwick, September 15, 1921.

But this statement of the case did not entirely satisfy Sherman. The lust of battle was strong in him, and he still had some scores to pay off. While yielding to the desires of Mr. Sedgwick, he did not permit his prey to escape him. The personalities which were withdrawn from the *Atlantic Monthly* were utilized in a peppery dish, entitled "The Belligerent Young," prepared for the "Literary Review" of the *Evening Post.*[27] Here his object is to show the difference between the directionless revolt of "the Young Intellectuals"—"puerile revolt for revolt's sake, in behalf of an individuality without character"—and the well-disciplined revolt of the Puritan, "inspired by his zeal for improvement, by his passion for perfection." He makes merry havoc of Mr. Stearns's "belligerent individualism" and pursues his argument, down to its melancholy threat to abandon America, with relentless mockery, turning even Mr. Stearns's civility into an object of ridicule: "Now mix a pint of the Puritan ideas of Mr. Villard with a peck of the anti-Puritan ideas of Mr. Mencken and add two quarts of civility and water and you will get the ideas of Mr. Stearns." He took time also to pay his respects to his other antagonists, who, he observed, "in accordance with the principles of militant journalism, and of the cuttlefish, created a 'diversion' from my proposal [for a reconciliation between the artists and the Puritans] by charging me with a series of atrocities, in an ascending scale: with instigating anti-Semitism, with inspiring an anti-artistic crusade, with seeking to revive Sabbatarianism and the Blue Laws, with denying that Mr. Spingarn is a good citizen, with desiring to withhold naturalization papers from Mr. Francis Hackett, and, finally, with driving Mr. Harold Stearns out of the country to escape the impending Puritan domination: Having represented me personally as a new and more obnoxious St. Dominic or, at the mildest, as a joy-killing clerical person who on Saturday nights calls his family from the bridge table to read them *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, they conclude, with an awfully deterrent emphasis: 'Such is the Puritan!'"

The acid quality of some of the personalities in this article evidently drew a remonstrance from his sister and made Sherman defend his procedure:

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[27] January 14, 1922.

"Yes, I used to write on Villard's paper and have dined and slept at his house. But that doesn't prevent one's commenting on his published work. All the people, except Villard (in my article on the 'Belligerent Young'), have 'attacked' me in print, some of them repeatedly. I think my retort is in pretty good temper. A little 'cuss' who used to edit the Chicago *Tribune's* literary columns, and who reviewed my book *On Contemp. Literature* in the most scurrilous fashion, and who put in a sneer about it once a week, is now associate editor of *McCall's;* and a month ago he offered me $350 for an article of 2000 words. That will show you some of the seamier side of contemporary journalism. They are not all as dishonest as that. The honest ones and the dishonest alike, however, would all rather be attacked than ignored! And in order to get the ideas that I am trying to propagate into circulation, I have to be, from time to time, in the attacking party."[28]

Whatever defect of temper there may be in "The Belligerent Young," one can find no fault on that score with his attitude on the same issue toward the writers of the symposium called *Civilization in the United States.* In a bibliographical note Mr. Spingarn had spoken of "The National Genius" as saying all that could be said in favor of "the fixed moralism of the older American criticism," and had given the following excerpt as typical of its temper: "When Mr. Spingarn declares that beauty is not concerned with truth or morals or democracy, he makes a philosophical distinction which I have no doubt that Charles the Second would have understood, approved, and could, at need, have illustrated. But he says what the American schoolboy knows to be false to the history of beauty in this country. Beauty, whether we like it or not, has a heart full of service."[29] Moreover, Mr. Ernest Boyd had been viciously abusive in the same volume, yet after reading the book Sherman wrote to Van Doren that in spite of the "studious sneer" of the one and the "contemptuous kicks" of the other he could have reviewed the book "much more kindly and sympathetically than most of the academic souls have done: for, like yourself, I really believe in criticism, even when it is pretty adverse, provided only it

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[28]Letter to Mrs. Katherine S. Gilbert, January 5, 1922.

[29]*Civilization in the United States,* p. 535.

attempts to be animated by a serious purpose."[30] To Mr. Spingarn he wrote the following letter:

(*To J. E. Spingarn*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois.
Jan. 26, 1922.

My dear Mr. Spingarn:

You kindly sent me last spring Hamp's *People*, which I read and, I think, acknowledged. Since then I have received, at the suggestion of some branch of your House, the translation from Goethe, *The Patrioteer*, and now *Civilization in the United States*. I wish to thank some *person* and not the firm for these favors, so please receive my thanks and bestow them where they belong.

There is none of them that I have not been glad to read; so my gratitude is not formal but genuinely appreciative. And I am directing it to you because I want the opportunity to say that I recognize and applaud the thing which you are doing for the public in the development of the European Library, and when I have fit opportunity to say this in print, I shall do so, quite without regard to divergencies of opinion in other matters.

Since in the course of time I hope to deliver other "attacks" on your literary or æsthetic theories, I should like to say here that I have not in the past,—and shall not in the future,—concern myself with anything but the legitimate subject of discussion in your published work; and anyone who represents me as doing otherwise misconstrues my purpose and my words.

The articles in *Civilization*, many of them, are conceived in a far better temper and conducted at a far more respectable level of discussion than has ordinarily been selected by the somewhat miscellaneous and incongruous assemblage of Young People who contribute to it. This is a subject for congratulation, though the achievement is by no means complete.

I am quite in accord with you that the present task of the critic is to "revivify and reorganize thought." Naturally I do

[30]February 20, 1922.

not agree with your characterization of my own position in your bibliographical note, nor do I think your "typical" illustration, taken out of the context, is at all typical but rather distinctly misrepresentative. The only reason that I mention it is, that it appears to have been chosen to give color to the kind of misconstruction which I have deprecated above.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Have you noticed that Conrad Aiken in the notes graduates from Harvard at thirteen? And that Fuessle's *Gold Shod*, laid at Chicago Univ., is said to be a picture of the failure of the State University?

From his concentration upon this group of hostile critics Sherman's attention was distracted for a moment by the appearance of a new volume of *Shelburne Essays*, so he paused to comment on Mr. More's importance "to those who care for 'the whole truth,' precisely because he meets current popular tendencies with an inveterately 'antagonistic mode of thought,'" and on his conservatism invested with a "humorous crustiness" and expressed with an "old true-blue Tory violence."[31] Politely but definitely he discriminated his faith from Mr. More's, whereupon the latter wrote to him in warning: "It amuses me to hear your flings at the snowy peaks of Mt. Sinai and to read your repudiations of Tory humanism and the rest, and then to see you flayed alive by Mencken and the other scourges of God as one of the head devils of the conspiracy of Toryism. My dear fellow, yours is but a sickly sort of democracy at bottom, and needs a doctor. You had better go forward a little or turn back a little, or you will find yourself between two camps, pelted by both. On the whole I reckon myself about as good a democrat as you are."[32] And chaffingly a little later: "I should like to wrangle genially with you over an infinite number of things, more particularly over your funambulatory art in walking a rail fence without falling into anybody's field and with the grace and *sprezzetto* of a sage."[33]

[31]"The Religion of the Day," *Independent and the Weekly Review*, November 12, 1921.

[32]November 22, 1921.

[33]March 16, 1922.

In the review just quoted Sherman had described the mission of the ideal critic as one of mediation and reconciliation whose concern it was "to occupy all the tenable ground between the embattled extremes." He was beginning to realize his own mediatory rôle, though at the moment he seemed to be exercising it not exactly by reconciliation but by stepping in between the combatants and knocking them both on the head. However, his sympathies with the more liberal tendencies in criticism were asserting themselves with greater and greater clearness and becoming noticeable even to some of his hardened adversaries.

In November of 1920 Mr. Sedgwick had suggested a paper for the *Atlantic* dealing with American standards of criticism, and Sherman's letter of reply was in itself a miniature essay on the subject.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
November 16, 1920.

DEAR MR. SEDGWICK:

The subject which you raise in your letter of November 10th, criticism, is one on which both the old gentlemen and the young Arabs have been fairly voluble of late. Yet there is always another article or even a book in it—just because we live in a "changing world," and the old standards don't fit the new cases but demand fresh interpretation.

I am rather struck by your remark that each generation should "create its own standards." I can interpret the phrase so that I agree with it. Yet as more or less of a literary "conservator" I incline to think of standards as the lawyer thinks of laws and precedents, as something given, inherited; and of the critic's task as the continuous interpretation of them and the reference to them of current work.

It is for this reason that I lay so much stress upon "tradition." Through tradition we get our standards. By keeping our tradition alive we preserve our standards. By making our tradition vital, bringing it to bear upon current work, we may hope to produce something equivalent to the "thoroughbred" in literature. And all great literatures tend to something at the center like a thoroughbred strain.

France and England both show the thoroughbred strain, that "solidarity" of which you speak. More definitely, I suppose we mean a certain continuity, in the central writers, of a certain quantity and quality of culture, of a certain purity and distinction of style, and, above all, of a certain elevation of feeling and a clearness and breadth of vision and a serenity of tone.

American literature and criticism exhibit these qualities only intermittently. The thoroughbred strain is thin and broken. At the present time it appears to me lacking in vitality. It doesn't sufficiently make itself felt. It tends to be so very refined, quiet, and unaggressive that it is easily hooted into insignificance by the genial Arabs of the press, who have no authority, but infinite noise.

All this is, as I suppose, fairly obvious. It is perfectly easy to make the arraignment. It has been done again and again. When we are not doing it, our friends in England are doing it for us. They are never weary of assuring us that we have no criticism. They are perhaps a little blind to the little that we have, but they are almost excusably so.

I am not much interested in writing on the subject unless I can say something that will help to change the situation.

I suppose the chief reason why we don't have a steady current of substantial literary criticism is that we don't want it.

The customary thing to say is, that we have no proper organs for it. Our weeklies in general are interested in politics. The serious criticism of literature attracts only the seriously critical, who are too small a body to trifle with. That, I suppose, is the prevailing view.

I think the prevailing view is partly wrong and partly right. I think it is true that the publishers and most of the editors don't much believe in criticism, believing that the public, sacred being, doesn't care for it.

But I suspect that the publishers and editors are wrong. When I come into close contact with the constituent elements of the public, it seems to me that they exhibit a real appetite, a craving, for a formative force, for authoritative leadership, for the guidance of experts—in short for professional criticism.

Why doesn't the criticism appear in response to the demand? Because there aren't six men in our hundred millions who can

be spared and set apart for the business of criticism. I believe that is the heart of the whole matter.

Who writes the literary criticism at present? The uneducated reporter. The overburdened editor. The college teacher on Sunday mornings and in odd moments between committee meetings. It is hasty, ill-informed, or wooden, pedantic—deficient in authority or in charm or in both.

I think the remedy is (1) organs of criticism. But (2), most emphatically, the development of a small body of men who can and will give their lives to the profession, as, say, Browning and Tennyson gave themselves to poetry.

I suppose there may be a half a dozen men in the country at present who would gladly become professional writers of criticism for the rest of their lives, if anyone would pay them for it. Under existing conditions, they make their living at one profession; write with their left hands, whenever they can find an interval, and make enough out of a year's work to pay, perhaps, the annual dentist's bill. It isn't possible to produce a Sainte-Beuve in that fashion.

Our magazines reward enormously certain kinds of success in fiction, so that we have abundance of men and women willing to put all their energy and intellectual capital into the production of it. The production of the sort of criticism that we want is not a less serious task than this writing of fiction. It does not require less outlay, less application, less talent, or a rarer type of talent. It requires everything that a man has. And there is no warrant in Scripture for supposing that everything that a man has he will give to pay his dentist's bill.

If one could imagine some highly talented member of the idle rich class inflamed with a passion for literary fame, setting himself the task of contributing, say, twice a month a fine piece of literary criticism to one of our reviews (and donating the fee to some charity), he could be sure of recognition in three years as one of the leading critics of America. Nothing could compete with him. Furthermore, I suspect that half a dozen different editors would be clamoring for his "output." For what they seem to need and require is the steady services of a talent which at present they have no means to engage.

The minds of our idle rich class do not seem to run at present in critical channels. Therefore the problem seems to me to be

essentially this: How to develop and reward a professional literary class, distinct, on the one hand, from the journalist and the popular novelist, and, on the other, from the damned professor. Do you see how this can be done?

I "view with interest" your resolution to swing around the West. My latchstring will always be out. Haven't you a lecture about the Pilgrims that you would give to the university, or perhaps some talks to our journalists? If you have something in your bag of this nature, I should be glad to see what I can get out of our Committee on Lectures.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

His absorption in the Puritans and other matters prevented Sherman from doing anything with the topic till the spring of 1922, when he prepared an address for the William Vaughn Moody Lectures at the University of Chicago on "The Point of View in American Criticism" and then submitted it to Mr. Sedgwick as a treatment of the question whether every age has not a right to its own standards, saying that it had taken him a long while to work out the conditions under which it seemed possible to answer in the affirmative.

This highly important article marks a definite stage in Sherman's formulation of his democratic faith, fixing for it a firm critical support in the historic and social forces of American life. After outlining with a few broad strokes the larger movements in American history and their reflection in literature, he diagnoses the existing condition of the national spirit as one of wholesome pessimism, from which recovery is possible by the adoption of an adequate critical point of view. This brings him to a consideration of the adequacy of the prevailing points of view, and the first one that he dismisses is that of "the elder critics in the academic tradition," who have "in general not dealt sympathetically, or even curiously, with the phenomena. Fixed in an inveterate fidelity to the point of view established by the early classical Americans, they look with a mingling of disdain and abhorrence upon our impious younger world." Having separated himself in this clear fashion from the right wing, he characterized the critics on the other side, who were endeavoring to deal sympathetically and curiously with the

phenomena, as utterly unorganized and incongruous in their points of view, some standing for universal sympathy, some for universal cynicism, some for æstheticism. Particularly mischievous, he thought, were the popular Freudians, because they at least recognized "that the kingdom of disorganization [was] within the individual breast" and there was something seductive and perilous in their counsels of emancipation from restraint and the release of suppressed desires. To counteract their influence he offered to the younger generation a more dignified interpretation of their desires, and with it an infusion of his own energetic spirit.

"The deepest craving of these average young men and women," he declared, "is not to be unbound, and released, and to be given a license for a free and spontaneous doing as they please in all directions. They recognize that nature and environment and lax educational discipline have made them beings of sufficiently uncoördinated desires and scattering activities. What they deeply crave is a binding generalization of philosophy, or religion, or morals, which will give direction and purpose, which will give channel and speed to the languid diffusive drift of their lives. The suppressed desire which caused their unhappiness is a suppressed desire for a good life, for the perfection of their human possibilities. The average unreflective man does not always know that this is, in fact, his malady. And in the blind hunger and thirst of his unenlightened nature, he reaches out eagerly for opiates and anodynes, which leave him unsatisfied. But what the innermost law of his being demands, what his human nature craves, is something good and great that he can do with his heart and mind and body. He craves the active peace of surrender and devotion to something greater than himself. Surrender to anything less means the degradation and humiliation of his spirit."

If this was the spiritual state of the average man, the remedy for his discontents was, according to Sherman, to help him to an understanding of his own nature, "so that he may recognize more fully what part the things of the mind and the imagination may play in the satisfaction of his suppressed desires," and to this end it was also necessary that the "old Roman-American aristocrats" should accept "the purified religion of democracy."

He reaffirmed in his own characteristic language the Arnoldian gospel of culture, which was "to effect a redintegration of the national will on the basis of a genuinely democratic humanism, recognizing as its central principle the duty of bringing the whole body of the people to the fullest and finest human life of which they are capable."

In concluding, he tried to forestall misunderstanding or deliberate distortion by affirming that the point of view which he was advocating was not, as it had been called, moralistic, but essentially religious. "The religion of an intelligent man," he went on to explain, "is not a principle of repression, any more than it is a principle of release. Religion binds us to old morals and customs so long as they help us towards the attainment of an object; but it releases from old morals and customs as soon as they impede our progress towards that object. The object gives the standard. Confronted with heirlooms or with innovations, one's first question is, does this, or does it not, tend to assist the entire body of the people towards the best human life of which they are capable? Advance to this point of view, and you leave behind you universal sympathy, universal cynicism, universal æstheticism, and the black bats of the Freudian cave. You grasp again a power of choice which enables you to accept or reject, with something of that lost serenity which Socrates displayed when he rejected escape from prison and accepted the hemlock. You recover something of that high elation which Emerson displayed when he said: 'I am primarily engaged to myself to be a public servant of all the gods, to demonstrate to all men that there is intelligence and good-will at the heart of things, and ever higher and higher leadings.'"

Mr. Sedgwick received this essay with appreciation, mingled with surprise at some of its unexpected judgments. "Few conservatives," he wrote, "are wise enough to detach here and there little bodies of opinion from the opposing ranks. You ought to have gone into politics. Perhaps you will. Who knows?"[34] This was a gratifying compliment, but not as surprising as the one that emanated from the *Freeman* where the essay was acclaimed as employing "the right method" in establishing a point of view in American criticism. It would not be like the *Freeman* if it did

[34] June 21, 1922.

not look forward to the establishment of a "more competent point of view." "When that happens, however," it added, "it will be observed to Mr. Sherman's credit that he has anticipated this work in nearly every essential respect. The kind of history used will be the same as that which Mr. Sherman uses, only there will be more of it. The method of its use will be Mr. Sherman's; and most important of all, the *sense* of history that will inform the work will be the same as Mr. Sherman's. To have accomplished so much within the scope of a single magazine article is a handsome achievement; and it is no disparagement but quite the contrary to observe that its greater value lies in its implications and intimations rather than in its formal conclusions."[35] Praise from this quarter was a sign that the *rapprochement* which Sherman was working for was not unattainable. Of all the approving comments that he received in newspapers[36] and from private correspondents none pleased him better than those which testified that he was reaching the younger people, causing him to recall with a smile the reviewer who said that "younger generation is Mr. Sherman's word for *damn*." He felt he was making some headway in his campaign. Hitherto he had spoken frequently enough to the young. As a lay preacher he exposed their shortcomings in "The Shifting Centre of Morality" and pointed to their goal in the address on "Vocation," but here he constituted himself their spokesman.

It was as their spokesman, too, that he meant to offer himself when he undertook to explain the importance of Sinclair Lewis "as a leader in the famous revolt of the Younger Generation." Though written at the prompting of the publishers and used by them to advertise Mr. Lewis's books, Sherman could truthfully say: "It is not a puff for *Babbitt* and it does not contain a word of praise which I should not have written if the article had been ordered by Mr. Lewis's best foe. . . . I have so much admiration for the man's work and so much interest in what he will do next that I have been able to indulge myself in a good deal of praise. In fact, I have treated his books with a seriousness of respect which will probably set the hen-roosts cackling—

[35] January 24, 1923.

[36] "As enlightening as any similar number of words that have appeared in this country during the past ten years," was the characterization by Mr. R. L. Duffus in the New York *Globe*, November 13, 1922.

so that you may tell him from me that I hope he won't go bad on my hands!"[37] The sincerity of Sherman's admiration is attested by what he had written on first reading *Main Street:* "We read your *Main Street* aloud during the holidays, till 1:30 New Year's Eve, and I am happy to say that it squares with my hopes for the American novel. I was continuously delighted with its dramatic force, its veracity, its clarifying humor, its critical edge, and its exuberant vitality."[38] Furthermore, he had selected it as the best novel of the year for the Pulitzer Prize. One could hardly dispute that the qualities which he now emphasized in Mr. Lewis's work were really there—the "free air, the swoop of the hawk, arrows that go straight to the mark." The epithets are chosen with the usual discrimination—"candid, crisp, fresh, alert, clean, supple, active, darting." That the author of *Main Street* has shaken our complacency with regard to the average quality of our civilization and that in his portrayal of the representative he marks a return to the main matter and the manner of our national narrative would hardly seem to be startling assertions, yet Sherman's fears about the reception of the essay were justified. The ever-alert *Freeman* thought the treatment was "generally wrongheaded" and that it did a disservice to Sinclair Lewis by attributing to him a significance and "profundity" (this word was of the *Freeman's* own choosing and does not represent Sherman's valuation) which he did not have.[39] Perhaps there was compensation in getting from Lewis himself such a bit of news as this: "I think you may perhaps like to know that in the new novel I shall, to some extent, do what you suggest in your pamphlet—use as central character a person whom I really like and greatly admire";[40] or in hearing him say, "It's awfully good to have one like yourself with a shrewd and demanding eye upon me, querying 'Where the devil's that next novel? Stop squirming!'"[41] But as far as the reviewers were concerned, he had still to resign himself to a considerable measure of misunderstanding, at times in unexpected places.

[37]To Alfred Harcourt, summer, 1922.

[38]To Mr. W. D. Howe, January 8, 1921.

[39]October 18, 1922.

[40]December 11, 1922, referring to *Arrowsmith.*

[41]December 21, 1922.

CHAPTER XXIV

APOSTLE OF DEMOCRACY

THE contest with the "intellectuals" did not consume all of Sherman's literary energies during these years, nor were his militant tactics limited to assaults on the young radicals. He administered a stinging rebuke to snobbishness in a review of Mrs. Katharine Fullerton Gerould's *Modes and Morals*, and rallied the Bourbon spirit in literature whenever an opportunity offered. But more particularly he sought to enrich his conception of American character by studying it in the variety of its manifestations and to create a gallery of portraits possessing the dominant features of the national physiognomy.

In contemplating the life of Henry Adams he was fascinated by the emergence of a new type of intellectual American, and to estimate its significance he saturated himself in the history and the voluminous literary output of the entire family, from John Adams down. Then he proceeded to compress the result of all this reading within the straitened confines of a *Nation* essay. No wonder that he wrote to Woodbridge, "Never take up seven Adamses in a single article—Renders it very difficult to get unity, mass, coherence."[1] To his editor he offered a similar justification: "I had so many Adams[es] to present that I didn't get round at all to making the central comment and criticism on them which I had in mind when I set out. That was your fault in asking me to do three; I thought since the principle of unity had been violated we might as well be hanged for a sheepfold as for one lamb; and so I made it seven; and have a book on the Adamses as a consequence in my vitals."[2] He chuckled over what some of his friends regarded as a shocking misprint of "Adonises" for "Adamses," an epithet which he had attached

[1]April 2, 1920.

[2]To Carl Van Doren, April 15, 1920.

to the last generation of the family in reminiscence of Leigh Hunt's compliment to George IV as "a fat Adonis of fifty," observing that there is a good deal of the Adonis in both Henry and Charles Francis II, though he was not so sure of Brooks.[3] As a piece of psychological analysis the essay is among the most masterly that ever came from Sherman's pen, and it has the further interest of illustrating by anticipation the method proposed in "The Point of View in American Criticism."

He had hardly done with the Adamses before he began to work in earnest on Emerson and Whitman. It did not matter that the occasion was merely the editing of texts for college classes. The audience he had in mind was not that of callow undergraduates but the more mature public within and without college walls that was susceptible to the impact of his ideas. Into the Introduction to the Emerson, he said, he put more work than into anything of that length he had ever written, and the space covered in his manuscripts by notes on his reading gives sufficient proof of this. He was anxious, moreover, "to give an extra fillip to reviewers and to the casual person who picks up the book uncertain whether he had better go on with it."[4] Similarly, in commenting on the contemporary references in his Whitman essay he observes that "they will not detract from the interest of the treatment ten years hence" and that he made them "quite deliberately with the idea of giving a value to Whitman by making him a measure of his posterity."[5] Both studies are conceived in the interest of the gospel of democracy. In Emerson we are shown the emphasis upon democratic individualism as against the claims of centralized authority, the insight of "a humanist bent upon liberating and developing not some but all of the properly human powers"; in Whitman the stress is placed on the reconciliation between individual freedom and the cosmopolitan ideal of a harmonious and satisfactory life for the entire body of humanity. To the latter he applies his test for great poetry, whose purpose and effect it is, he declares, "to raise a man in the midst of his common life above the level of his ordinary emotion by filling him with a sentiment of his importance as a moral being and of the great-

[3]Letter to Homer Woodbridge, April 16, 1920.

[4]Letter to W. D. Howe, January 8, 1921.

[5]Letter to Carl Van Doren, August 25, 1920.

ness of his destiny. Does Whitman's poetry accomplish that end? It does, and it will continue to do so with increases of power as the depth and sweep of his book, its responses to a wide range of needs, become familiar in the sort of daily exploration through a number of years, in dull times and crucial, which such a book can repay." After the appearance of the volume he gave further expression to his enthusiasm for Whitman: "I keep reading and re-reading these pieces; and the more I read them, the more I feel the real heaven-descended greatness of the man's passion, and the moving and novel grandeur of his poetic style. It is no longer with me an enthusiasm of first contact. He grows on me, like the Bible and Shakespeare."[6]

Early in 1921 Sherman received a letter from Mr. G. H. Putnam saying that his firm was preparing to reissue the poems of Joaquin Miller and that it was "essential for the purpose of the undertaking that the literary worker accepting the editorial task should be one who had a full measure of appreciation for Miller's work and who was able to commend his productions to the public of to-day," and adding that these conditions would be amply satisfied if Sherman accepted the editorial office. After a little hesitation Sherman reacted as the following letter shows.

(*To G. H. Putnam*)

Urbana, Illinois,
January 20, 1921.

Mr. George Haven Putnam,
2 West 45th Street,
New York City.
Dear Mr. Putnam:

Your proposal that I edit and write an introduction for a volume of Joaquin Miller's poems finds me rather busy, as the "damned professor" is likely to be at this time of the year, but it has appealed to me more each day that I have meditated upon it, and for particular reasons.

In the first place, I am very greatly interested in doing what I can, which is little enough, to keep alive the American literary past, and to connect our native traditions with our present en-

[6]Letter to Carl Van Doren, February 20, 1922.

terprises. At present I don't know Miller's work as a whole quite well enough to say just how I rank him; but it is perfectly clear to me that he is personally a striking and picturesque figure in our Western literature and that his poetry is an important link in our literary history. He is a real discoverer of the poetic West and has therefore a place in a movement which is widening and becoming steadily more rather than less noteworthy.

In the second place, I lived some years of my boyhood in California and spent several months of one year "roughing it" and actually participating in the placer mining of Arizona; so that all that aspect of our civilization remains for me still invested with a certain romantic glamour, and I should return to it sympathetically in the work of Miller. Furthermore, I am expecting to revisit California this summer after an absence of twenty-five years, and, after teaching in the summer session at Berkeley, to see some of the natural glories of the state which excited Miller's enthusiasm. If Mrs. Miller is living there still, I could very likely talk with her.

Now as to my conditions. I don't think I could safely undertake to have my part done before fall. Without knowing just how extensive an introduction is required, I should estimate that my labor would be worth 300 dollars. I should like to enquire further whether I might have the privilege of including the introductory essay, or a part of it, in a volume of American essays which I am preparing. This last, as you doubtless know, is not a *pecuniary* consideration from my point of view.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

Having once embarked, he pushed out with customary promptness, but the task was more laborious than he had anticipated, and he alludes to the difficulties in the letter to the publisher accompanying the completed manuscript.

(*To G. H. Putnam*)

July 7, 1922.

MY DEAR MR. PUTNAM:

I am sending you to-day by express the copy for our edition of Joaquin Miller. The job proved much more prolonged than I had expected. The lack of all kinds of trustworthy biograph-

ical and bibliographical information necessitated doing the whole thing from the ground upward.

In accordance with your suggestion, I have tried to make an edition containing all of Miller's poetry that one wants to consult. I have accordingly included all the poems in the Bear Edition and some fifty more. For this purpose Mrs. Miller's manuscript anthology was of no value; neither was the collation of it with the Bear Edition, made in your office; for most of the poems in her collection which seemed to be additions to the Bear text proved on examination to be only excerpts with new titles.

The copy contains the following items:

I. A preface of one page describing the scope of the text.

II. An introduction of 34 type-written pages, biographical and critical. This is the only coherent and fairly comprehensive account of Miller's life and works with which I am acquainted. In the absence of anything of the sort, I thought the critical remarks the least important and limited them accordingly. . . .

Finally, you may be interested to hear that in the early stages of this job I regretted the bargain, as I soon saw there would be no adequate pecuniary compensation for the time and labor involved in it. But as I proceeded, my sense of the interest in Miller, both as a man and a poet, increased very greatly; and my present opinion is that this edition is thoroughly worth while both from your point of view and from mine.

Mrs. Miller, whom Sherman had taken pains to interview in California, was displeased by certain passages in the Introduction and wrote to the publisher accordingly. He, in turn, transmitted the protest to Sherman and received the following full explanation.

(*To G. H. Putnam*)

Urbana, Illinois,
April 24, 1923.

Mr. G. H. Putnam,
2 West 45th Street
New York City.

Dear Mr. Putnam:

I agree with Mrs. Miller that the publishers have done very well indeed in their part of making the book of Miller's poems.

Photograph by Orren Jack Turner

PAUL ELMER MORE

It is quite legible, attractive to look upon, easy to consult, and the book opens well. The blackness and size of the type on the title-page are, I think, rather excessive for the size of the page. Otherwise I am well pleased with the appearance of the book.

As to the contents of the Introduction, while it was going through the proof, I wrote to Mr. MacGillivray, advising him to look through your correspondence with Mrs. Miller to see whether you had agreed to submit the manuscript to her. I told him at the same time that I myself had made no such agreement and that my engagements were exclusively with you. Mr. MacGillivray made no report to me on this point, and I discharged my conscience of responsibility.

As to the particular points in question, I do not think anyone needs to feel much perturbation. I consulted Mrs. Miller in three separate and extended interviews in California, and got all the information from her which she was willing to give. She gave no information about Mr. Miller's first marriage and divorce. The incident, however, was a crucial one in his career, and some account of it was necessary for the understanding of his poetry and for coherence in the narrative. I included no private or unpublished information. I used Mr. Miller's own published statement of the case for his side of it, and a summary of the first Mrs. Miller's statement, as published in England, for her side of it. All this is open to the public. And to tell less than that was to neglect my duty in the biographical sketch.

The other point, about Mr. Miller's "rôle" and his "costumes" and "poses," does not appear to me worth discussing. Any man who is a public lecturer and a poet with a strong turn for the picturesque has rôles and costumes and poses; and they are nothing to be ashamed of in his case any more than in the case of Sir Henry Irving.

We have made the fullest collection of his poems ever made, and the Introduction is, I believe, considerably the fullest account of his life and work. It is of course just as truthful and fair as I could make it. In the long run I think Mrs. Miller herself will come to see that Mr. Miller's memory is better served in that way than by suppressions and uncritical panegyric. From your point of view, and from the point of view of the public, I think there can be no question about the matter.

I have written a letter to Mrs. Miller with a view to reconciling her with her editor. Our relations hitherto, I may add, have been entirely friendly.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

Before the work on Joaquin Miller was well under way, Sherman became involved in the correspondence between George Sand and Gustave Flaubert. With his power of finding relevance in most things that met his eye Sherman perceived a bearing in these letters upon the questions that interested him at the moment. The translation was made by his friend Mrs. Aimee McKenzie and the introduction was composed by Sherman in California in the summer of 1921. "In my opinion," he wrote to Messrs. Boni and Liveright, "the book is of extraordinary fascination and of many-sided interest—more interesting in some ways than anything else from the hand of either of the celebrated authors. It is really crammed with discussions of the questions of art and morals which are engaging the attention of young people to-day."[7] It was almost the only instance in which he had to make advances to a publisher and one of the few instances in which he was deeply dissatisfied with the handling of one of his books by the publishers. It was brought out in a limited edition in this country and before a year had elapsed the plates were sold to Duckworth. The special interest of this correspondence to Sherman was in the contrast between the morose pessimism of Flaubert and the exuberant joyousness of George Sand. His sympathy was all with the latter. It was about this time that he remarked in a conversation with Mr. Ellery Sedgwick that he saw his mistake in attempting to contribute to the sum of human virtue instead of to the sum of human happiness. The unmerciful application of Flaubert to literary toil might have been expected to find favor in Sherman's eyes, but looking at the matter humanly he recognized that this work was done at the expense of "the cheerful sanities" of the world and judged Flaubert for his inability to reconcile being an author with being a man. In George Sand, on the other hand, he welcomed an abounding love for her kind, a spirit which spread itself freely and gaily in many directions, an

[7] May 21, 1921.

instinctive trust in humanity which strengthened his own belief in the soundness of the democratic principle. Call it, he says, an effusion of sentiment or a chant of faith, yet it is a faith that sustained the shocks of many long years, a sentiment that made life sweet. It was, as Mr. More wrote in acknowledging the book, a subject made for Sherman's pen, with the distinctions and oppositions clearly and finely drawn, and it is interesting to note that he added, "George Sand is a writer with whom I have a natural sympathy and Flaubert has always been strangely antipathetic to me in his ideas both of art and life."[8]

In sending a copy of the book to Professor Babbitt Sherman accompanied it with some expressions of opinion on the views of Messrs. More and Babbitt, and also announced his forthcoming edition of Emerson.

(*To Irving Babbitt*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois.

My dear Babbitt:

. . . It is a great satisfaction to me to believe that I find your doctrines growing rather more than less tangible with years. As I recently wrote to More, I rise with enthusiasm at your great slogan "positive." While More himself, so far as my poor powers are concerned, seems bent on withdrawing into a pure religious transparency in which my villatic pinions droop and fail. Please don't repeat any of this to him, for I have said it myself to him in different words, whenever I have written. It irritates me to see him spending his mature powers in a form of writing so little adequate as a vehicle for his thought and feeling. He ought, *me judice*, to detach himself wholly from the bark and husk of his scholarship, and emerge as a living soul. He could do it wonderfully if he would abandon himself to writing as a person instead of writing as a damned professor. He ought to write, as I have said more than once, his literary autobiography. But I'm afraid that he won't.

I wonder how you are getting on with the great assault on imperialistic democracy. If you get too close to the creature,

[8]January 20, 1922.

you are lost. Nothing of course delights me more than your occasional magnanimous concessions to the times. There you are Emersonian—in refusing to be manœuvered into "uncompromising opposition." I have recently put forth a small edition of Emerson, which the publishers are instructed to send to you. I will tell you privately that the Introduction was in thought dedicated to you, and you will see that you appear in the discourse. If it had been a volume really of my own, I should have asked permission to inscribe your name in it.

I am sending you also a copy of the Flaubert-Sand letters which Mrs. McKenzie and I did. Perhaps you will find the index useful in helping you quickly to some ammunition useful in the classroom. Since Mrs. McKenzie has been, and is still, in Italy, I had the privilege and pain of finally revising the translation and putting it through the press; so that I am responsible for all the howlers and have also an almost motherly tenderness for the child.

If either of these books *don't* reach you before long, please let me know. It's pretty quiet out here on the prairie. I hope you will find time one of these days to send me a line. A traveler from the East quoted you last fall to the effect that I had "been getting a little off the track lately." It sounds like what Kittredge calls "Anglo-Saxon understatement."

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

After reading both the books, Professor Babbitt sent the following comment:

". . . The *Emerson* is very nearly a pure panegyric, and perhaps an anthology of this kind did not call for anything more. I fancy that the reservations I am for making in regard to Emerson and above all in regard to the Emersonian influence are of a much more fundamental character than you deem needful. I feel forced to agree with much of what C. E. Norton says in the admirable estimate towards the end of the first volume of his correspondence (503–511). Brownell also makes some points that call for consideration, though his presentation as a whole strikes me as one-sided.—I note a different emphasis from mine in your treatment of George Sand. You end on the note of *love*,

whereas my final stress is on *will*, the type of will that can alone raise one above the naturalistic level and in behalf of which you made such a ringing plea in your introduction to your *Contemporary Literature*. It seems to me that you have been somewhat diverted from this anti-naturalistic campaign of late by your desire to defend American idealism against the intelligentsia. . . . Not being an idealist at all in the Wilsonian sense and not much of an idealist even in the Platonic sense, I have rather regretted this diversion of your energies. I should define myself as a realist according to the human law, a formula that when stated in this bare way, does not, I confess, convey much meaning. In spite of various divergencies between you and More and myself we come together at important points in the defence of standards and so will, I hope, continue to present a united front to the enemy. . . .

"I had a brief visit from More this winter and there was, as you may suppose, much debate about Plato. I differ with him pretty seriously as to the best method of bringing either religious or humanistic truth home to the present age. Your disagreement is, I gather, even more fundamental. When all is said and done I admire him profoundly for the *dourness* of his thinking."[9]

To the various points raised in this letter Sherman replied with spirit.

(*To Irving Babbitt*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
March 24, 1922.

My dear Babbitt:

. . . I am sorry you regarded my Emerson as a mere "panegyric." I had thought of it as rather an *exposition*, with occasional elements of *appreciation*. A panegyric is ordinarily somewhat less objective. I say this subject to correction, knowing that I speak to a master of *genres*.

I will indulge also in a mild retort to your aspersions of my treatment of G. Sand.

You remark that I emphasize "love" and you "will" as her note. But I wished to *distinguish her from Flaubert*. He has

[9]March 18, 1922.

as much will as she. She excels him by possessing, in addition to will, love and charm. Remember "the tongues of men and angels." One thing at a time. What is most scantily present in both I. B. and P. E. M. is just this *caritas*, which makes men respect the function of the will. It is richly present in Emerson; poorly in them. And you, I think, are wrong in praising More for his "dourness." That is More's defect, not his quality.

I have added this bit of criticism partly to prove to you that the critical faculty is not all swallowed up in the panegyric, and partly to show you that I have thought of something to talk about in case you stop in here.

With best regards to Mrs. Babbitt, who does, you may thank Providence, possess *caritas*,

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
April 11, 1922.

MY DEAR BABBITT:

. . . It has just penetrated my dull consciousness that your "reservations" with regard to Emerson, or rather your somewhat firm *insistence* upon them, was very likely due to my having connected your name with the tradition. When that light broke, I withdrew all objections to what I thought the rather too exclusively disparaging tone of your letter. If I seemed to associate you with a far more ruddy, nativistic, and enthusiastic strain than you cared to countenance you were of course incited by my carelessness to emphasize and dwell upon your divergence from that strain.

The relation between "caritas" and "will" is, as you say, a subject for a book. What I have been worrying about is that neither you nor More seem to have it under way and that I may have to write it! And you can see at a glance, that would be a calamity. On the other hand, I regard it as a calamity that the book is not yet written, and that in the meantime the other girl, the false *caritas*, has entered upon the inheritance.

We were very sorry to learn, from Professor Cestre, who was

here for a few days before your letter arrived, that Mrs. Babbitt has been so long and so seriously ill. Mrs. Babbitt, I have probably told you before, is my fondest recollection of Cambridge. I send her my love and earnest wishes for her health and wish these airy messengers might carry healing in their wings.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Among those who wrote to Sherman in generous appreciation of the Sand-Flaubert essay was Mr. W. C. Brownell. The meetings between the two men in New York during Sherman's sabbatical year had been a source of genuine pleasure to both, and a few letters had passed between them, but no occasion had subsequently occurred for a correspondence, and there was evidently too much shyness and delicacy on the part of either to invade the other's time without some immediate reason. Sherman had been asked at the beginning of this year to write an introduction for a reprint of the *American Prose Masters* and this supplied a definite motive for an interchange of letters. Toward no man of letters of his time did Sherman's feeling have quite that shade of reverence which entered into his admiration for Mr. Brownell; with none was his own outlook more sympathetic. In Mr. Brownell the critic of exacting standards and high moral fastidiousness was not at war with the friendly and hopeful observer of democracy, and that was a union which to Sherman represented the ideal American writer. Even the exquisiteness of the style, though it was not like the intense and vibrant movement of his own, had its appeal, for there was that in Sherman's æsthetic temperament which responded to the subtle involvements in the expression of Mr. Brownell as in that of Henry James or Mr. Santayana. There is a kind of courtly grace in this intercourse which one does not associate with the epistolary practice of the present day, for from the older critic to the younger the measure of respect was equally great. There is a striking fitness in the fact that Mr. Brownell's last book, bearing such a title as *Democratic Distinction in America*, should be dedicated "To the Memory of Stuart Sherman." It already confers some distinction on democracy when two such writers dedicate themselves to its promotion.

There is a note of personal warmth as well as critical admira-

tion in Mr. Brownell's first letter, and Sherman's reply is in the same tone, giving an account of the work he had been doing and of his plans for the immediate future.

(From W. C. Brownell)

48 West 59th Street,
Jan. 22, 1922.

DEAR MR. SHERMAN:

How good of you to have sent me a copy of your Flaubert-Sand. I greatly enjoyed every word—I think—of your introductory essay, and I go along with it *so* cordially, so *completely*, given the facts as you posit them. George Sand was an early love of mine tho' I've read—comparatively—little of her. The old error of reading more about than of a *sommité*—something you do not do, having perhaps ordered your life more wisely, perhaps because you've clung to the cloister as it were. But she does not require one to read very much of her in order to win one. As to Flaubert I remember when I tho't Madame Bovary a great milestone of fiction. Perhaps it is that and *even more*, and there are a few things—touches—in it truly of genius. But all those *faisandé* things seem less to me now at seventy years than the things that have a "tranquil depth of calm." It may be failing powers but it's not pose. *Salammbô* I broke a tooth or two on—the French was too difficult, the web too dense, the archæology too well done, too embedded and not easily skipped. At the time I felt a free man and acknowledged being bored. I remember as interesting the being rather driven to the unexpected conclusion that Flaubert seemed to get the better of Sainte-Beuve in the duel printed at the end of the book. My wife—who with her sister constitutes my new family—since *last* January—and to whom I read the Introduction says the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* is a fine book, but I have never read it or any other of Flaubert's, except the beginning of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* of wh. I soon tired—before getting to the point. *Somme toute* you see I am not well informed as to the subject but your essay seems to prove itself and to say what I should have thought it would and would have wished it to. *On Contemporary Literature* is a classic of our bookshelves where it figures in duplicate and is truly appreciated. Whenever I feel

a little bumptious over anything (*façon de parler*, alas!) I look over the Meredith in the interest of a return to that graver frame of mind occasionally possessing my Puritan ancestors, whose rollicking side you celebrated last summer in the *Atlantic*. —I read this reintegration at Williamstown, where we passed an ideal five weeks of holiday and where I naturally thought of Ogden and yourself as fortunate youths. I had rather perfunctorily in past days fancied that the Williams boys' and men's boast of the superiority of their *mise-en-scène* to ours at Amherst was an idle one, but I found it was founded on something very noble and exquisite, the contemplation of which did us good all day long (we had unintermittent fine weather) and now and then thrilled us when we got up for a while at four or five A. M. to watch the "intense lamp" of Venus lighting the mountain ridge with an almost *liquid* blue effulgence. We thought how good a thing it was that the guests of Barney Baruch from abroad—from Italy, e.g.—could look on the lovely natural spectacle there instead of on the skyscrapers or other wonders of some one of our cities. But I must go up to Amherst sometime and re-orient myself! I follow you with delight in the fun you permit yourself to have with "the young lions" of the day—of the moment. Perhaps I have missed some of the shafts sped through the leafage of the *Nation*—not devoured by me weekly nowadays. But I did not miss the piece about Mr. Mencken—and certainly that must have been the cream of whatever output, by whomsoever. It is a great gift to be able to comfort the heart of one's readers in that way, and at the same time to have that deeper strain which from time to time fortifies them—at least the sympathetic among them, for whom if it were not boyish, as it were, to say so, these seem discouraging times. They are perhaps particularly discouraging, nevertheless, however mature wisdom feels they won't last, because not only the situation but the forward look, the immediate outlook, is depressing. Perhaps never before with us was criticism so numerously practised, so childishly bad, or "so much needed." And the only kind that may salutarily affect the remoter outlook is that wh. is openminded enough to salvage the valuable residuum not only of tradition but of the eddies and currents of the turbid Contemporary stream. I confess, though, I don't see much that answers that requirement, outside of your own—as a

rule even the informed and elegant exceptions to the general run lacking the fundamental note sounded only by some iron string. To borrow Emerson's expression, more power to your elbow, therefore. Not that it lacks power, by the way! I was parroting the cant phrase. And, by the way also, haven't you accumulated another book, by this time? I understood you to say you weren't committed to Holt for a second volume, and I need hardly formally express "our" interest in one from you.

Feb. 15. Eric Rossiter was showing me the other day a letter he had received from you. He was evidently carrying it around with him as if the Holy Grail had been sent him by parcel post, and it was a kind of duty to show it to those who could appreciate it. Quite right, too. But I was also interested in the evidence it contained of yr. fallibility and yr. way of treating the same, wh. I find I do not monopolize. I shall be worse than ever now, and as imitators only get the defects and not the qualities (is that *Anglicé* by now?) I shall doubtless continue to defer and omit to atone. I am however truly chagrined at my delay in thanking you for the "Correspondance"—or rather—"ence."

(*To W. C. Brownell*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois.

Dear Mr. Brownell:

Your letter delighted me—first, because it was delightful in itself, and, second, because I thought you used the pronoun "we," as one enjoying a real though slightly distracted and very busy felicity. But how can one fail to be busy who has such abundance, such spirits, such enthusiasm, and such an excess of poetic ardor as to rise at four to see Lucifer—or was it Venus? —lamping the pale ridge of East Mountain? My labor with the Sand-Flaubert correspondence has been more than rewarded in eliciting this acknowledgment. I had supposed such letters were no longer written; and I only grudge it to myself, if it has impeded progress on that essay which, you so excitingly hint, you were writing in the margins of the French couple. You deplore the present state of our criticism; but these crude youths who *admit* themselves to be critics and occupy space in our journals —in which sinful company I am—"get by" at all, only because

the masters "mock the runner's heat," and carelessly pour their wealth into private correspondence! If you don't anticipate me, I shall have to publish it some day for the improvement of American Letters.

There are half a dozen essays started in this letter of yours, which I am not going to attempt answering to-day, for though I lead, as you suggest, a leisurely, cloistered, and, so to speak, a tea-pot life, we have our own little tempests in a narrow room, and a full tea-pot seems from within just as full as a larger vessel, or the sea itself. I am writing in order to insure my returning Miller's article on Santayana. I read it with lively interest, having heard it much spoken of by our local *philosophes* —now I know why—and having had since my Harvard days much pleasure in reading Santayana, and, of late, a new and somewhat complex satisfaction in his personality and his emergence in the field of current literature and the higher journalism. You see, he has been doing in a fashion what I have long felt that people of his sort and men like you and P. E. More should have been doing in all these years when you have been speaking to the Elect—I mean, he is addressing the English-speaking mob. You say that you yourself can't understand him; and that should make him gasp, if he heard it. And yet the *Mob* does understand him, in part, and in a sense. They like his disdain and his "superiority." By a kind of paradox, these are the notes, precisely the notes, in his literary personality which most appeal to the Mob. They think he has something that they have not, and that they want—and they are right. And under cover of his elegant supercilious indifference, he somehow slips it—the desired something, some of it—"over" to them.

I am in hearty agreement with Miller in my general reaction to Santayana. The line I have taken and intend to follow is the encouragement of the native tradition, with all its imperfections on its head, the Puritan, the pioneer, the Jacksonian strain, the adventurous, daring, exploring, spirit, democracy—whatever it can be made to mean, and including, at any rate, a growing fraternity. But the first thing that "took" me in Santayana was the sonnets, and I chanted for years the three lines that Miller quotes about "mocking the runner's heat." I got a couple of volumes of *The Life of Reason* and *The Sense of Beauty*, and *Poetry and Religion*, and these with the works of Arnold and

your books and whatever appeared in the older *Nation* style—the Charles Eliot Norton tradition, and Babbitt's and More's books—whatever, in short, was most hostile, on the surface, to the earthy, rough Jacksonian element in our life and literature seemed the things to cultivate. They seem so still.

I have been working on Emerson, then on Whitman; just now am trying to do something with that unmitigated liar, Joaquin Miller. From him I propose to turn to the introduction to *American Prose Masters*, which I suppose Howe has told you that I have been bold enough to attempt, as I was also bold enough to attempt Henry James. Well, my saltation is not quite so wildly saltatory as it looks from outside. I want to get the Emersons and the Jacksons together, and their offspring to intermarry. I believe the American breed will profit by the misalliance. On the one hand, we tend to have a horse without a rider; on the other hand, a rider without a horse. In this summer approaching, I hope to put two books into shape for consideration; one somewhat of the character of *On Contemp. Lit.*, the other to contain the more generalized statement of the positions illustrated concretely in the first. I haven't made any contract for either; only the second is more or less spoken for, and someone in Holt's has held out a hand recently; but I am rather keen to have a publisher this time who will understand what I am doing, and will give a little assistance to accomplishing it. Your expression of willingness to "consider" attracts me much, and if I were a Santayana, I should not hesitate for a moment. On my Jacksonian side, however, I may be too shaggy for the House; and then my summer plans may go agley. With 5000 students of English on my mind, there are distractions, even in this rural calm.

I have exceeded my original intention of writing a note to go with the returned article—without touching a dozen other responses which I should like to make, and have brought up in a horridly egotistical conclusion. But you, with the subtle skill of a terribly practised hand, have led me on. And now please pardon me, and accept my warm regard and best wishes to you and all your household.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.[10]

[10]February, 1922.

The three letters that follow are concerned directly with the *American Prose Masters* and Sherman's introduction for the new edition.

(*To W. C. Brownell*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
November 6, 1922.

DEAR MR. BROWNELL:

I am glad to hear that the *American Prose Masters* is ready to set, for that gives me the additional impulse in the nerves necessary to send me across the tape in my part of the course. The news of a revised edition is also delightful. I don't think you required revision any more than a Tiffany diamond; but the existence of two readings in the case of a classic is pleasant because it gives one an opportunity to see a prose-master changing what we otherwise should have thought incapable of change.

Though you have not written *at* "students," you are remarkably good for them. Your habit of adding another thought in each sentence makes you one of the "disciplinary" writers—like Plato, Newman, and "educators" of that sort, who never went in much for the text-book trade. I mean, you require us from step to step to stop and think, and set our own thoughts in order, and observe where we are going. When I get into your *French Art* or your *French Traits*, I find it difficult to get out again —it is so very agreeable to linger there and feel the formative pressure of the tone and structure of the entire work. You have brought into our critical writing elements of distinction which were not there before, and which, alas, don't seem likely to reappear again soon.

With all your subtleties, you will perhaps be amused to hear that I thought a little of asking permission to dedicate my *Americans* to you. But I rejected the idea with a sense that there was too much "rough stuff" in the book. I couldn't properly ask you to lend your name to it. And so, as we say in my family, "worst having come to worst" I dedicated it to my wife!—who has to stand for everything. This *worst coming to worst* was coined here some years ago by a lively young woman, assistant in my department, whom I drove around town on her arrival

in the fall, to find for her a place of lodging. At one house, she thought the available accommodations "terrible," "impossible." But she stopped at the door and said to the landlady in her most winning way: "If worst comes to worst, may I come back to you?"...

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
November 10, 1922.

DEAR MR. BROWNELL:

I am returning to-day the *American Prose Masters*, having carefully and profitably studied your revisions—indeed, having transcribed them all into my own copy. Some day I shall probably write a paper on this revision of a classic! It would be a nice thing if you sent me your own copy when the printers are entirely done with it.—Do you think the Introduction, by the way, should contain any reference to this process of revision? Or should you attend to that in the preface? And do you intend to have a preface? And don't you think an index would be a valuable addition for student use? For purposes of study, I have just made an index of names (rough and incomplete) at the back of my own copy, and I have already found it useful, —besides all the illumination it has cast for me upon your procedure and your company in the critical career.

In the last two days, while making these transcriptions, I have gone through the entire book with intent attention, and have revived and greatly increased the sense I had ten or twelve years ago of the beautiful roundness and finish of your critical form and the rigor of your conscientiousness in the substance. I don't believe you will think that I am offering you palaver when I say that these essays make the greater part of all the critical work in America, before and since their time, seem both slovenly and unintelligent. I admire your virtues immensely.

The revision of the Poe article I think deprives it of very little of its force, but by the substitution of "unsound" for "valueless" you have made the attack much "safer." On page 123, by the way, is it "plain" or "plainly"?

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
January 1, 1923.

DEAR MR. BROWNELL:

This line merely to assure you that I haven't been eating the lotus. Last night—the 31st of December—I wrote the last page of my introduction to *American Prose Masters*. I had been delayed in putting it through by barrels of Joaquin Miller proofs—some 1100 pages of poetry, and by departmental business. And when I got at it, it nearly killed me!

I won't go into this now further than to say: (1) That you have cut a bewildering number of facets on your "diamond," and it is almost impossible to have done with studying it. (2) As I pressed into the subject and brought the facts together, I was astonished to discover that you are an "intellectual radical"—I mean I was astonished to discover how thoroughly and relentlessly you are one. (3) This discovery induced an introspective process which resulted in the discovery that I myself, though less thoroughly and relentlessly one, am one to such an extent that the outside observer would have difficulty in distinguishing any difference on fundamental principles—though, heaven knows, gulfs enough in the quantity and quality of intelligence and information applied to these principles.

Well, as to the essay. That was difficult because you are difficult to discuss for students. There is so little to begin with. But I think they are just about reaching a point where they will find your work—all of it—very useful to them, and, when they have cracked the nut, very palatable. It seems to me, however, that you need quite a bit of introducing; accordingly I have attempted to expose or expone to them the comestibles offered to them by all your works. This involved necessarily, according to my theory, a good many excerpts and a treatment more expository than critical in general temper. For all which good intentions, I have not been able to avoid making it, I fear, a sustained polemic. As I happen to believe that we need at the present time a great deal more of the polemical in criti-

cism than we have, this doesn't strike me as a disadvantage; but it may appear so to you.

It also had difficulty to prevent itself from becoming a monograph. It is probably too long; and this is undeniably a disadvantage in an introduction.

Finally, I suffer from not knowing where to turn readily for *authoritative* supporting opinions on your French works. I had no Academicians to consult at my club! And you make one feel painfully the lack of expert living opinion at hand, which a provincial suffers. I ought to spend some time in looking up the foreign reviews of these books, and insert at least a little corroborative testimony.

But the thing has been so much delayed already, that I intend, instead, to file it this morning, and have it to the typist this afternoon, and send it to you within two or three days. If you are willing to suggest any tinkerings or to criticize it in any respect, I shall be delighted, though I have a lively sense, of course, that it is a queer job to criticize one's own portrait.—You could, at any rate, profitably set me right, if I have, as is not impossible, attributed to you beliefs which are not yours, or if I have otherwise blundered as to matters of fact.

For me, who relish so much more than you appear to, the personal element in this kind of work, it would have been, in a sense, more "fun" to make this study, if I had possessed Carlyle's paper bagful of biographical scraps, including especially your newspaper experience, your sojourns abroad, your acquaintance with French artists and men of letters, etc., etc., etc., etc. I relish hugely details of literary genesis. And I hope you will tell me, for my own satisfaction, at least, what *started* you. But, in your own writing, the suppression of all these matters has appeared to be so much a matter of conscience with you that I hadn't the "nerve" to ask you for anything of the sort or to attempt to introduce any of the sort of interpretation which such information makes possible, into my sketch. For this reason it is a less "human" document than I should have liked to make it.—And if, when I republish it in a volume of my own stuff, as I suppose I shall be permitted to do,—if you are willing to have it expanded somewhat on this human side,—well, I have given you the requisite hint!

With best regards and best wishes for the new year to you and your house and your household,

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

In writing his essay Sherman saw another chance to relate his ideas with the current discussion of the problems of American literature. When he finished it he wrote to Mr. Sedgwick, thinking of the possibility of publication in the *Atlantic Monthly*, that he felt it was a fairly complete introduction "to one of our most distinguished American men of letters, whose work has hitherto been simply too fine for popular recognition. With the present interest—popular interest—in criticism, I think that a fairly large audience will be astonished to find how timely and sound and immediately useful in clarifying their ideas and in supplying intelligible standards Mr. Brownell is. Incidentally the article contains by implication a considerable part of my own critical 'faith.' Primarily, however, as a service to Mr. Brownell's reputation and as a recognition of what he has done with so much distinction for so long, and as a service to his possible readers, I want to throw this article into the current of our present critical renascence, to profit by current discussion."[11]

He presented Mr. Brownell as the mediator between the Party of Nature and the Party of Culture, emphasizing the radical character of his intelligence and the modernity of his attitude toward society and his attitude toward art. In Mr. Brownell, he announced, American criticism was ripe: "If I were asked where in American letters a student can obtain, with least admixture of the irrelevant, that discipline of taste and that general sense of initiation which an earlier generation sought in the works of Ruskin, Arnold, and Pater, I should say in the works of Mr. Brownell." It was natural that in analyzing the qualities of the ideal man of letters who is reflected in Mr. Brownell's critical writing he should linger with special fondness over the "spiritual refinement of his democracy." He underscores with relish a phrase from the essay on Carlyle and adds this comment: "If Mr. Brownell had struck out no other bold

[11]January 15, 1923.

phrase than 'plebeian antagonism to democratic feeling,' he would deserve to be remembered. If he had developed no other thesis than this, that an instinct for equality is 'a constituent of refinement' and sensitiveness a mark of true democracy, he would still be an important contributor to American culture. To stigmatize as vulgarity what often masks as aristocratic superiority, and to name as the grace of a beautiful spirit what is often spoken of as the slatternly sentiment of the mob is, in a person of unquestionably distinguished refinement, to perform the service which the prince rendered to Cinderella and her proud stepsisters. To speak less 'tropically,' it is to begin that elevation of the level of one's private thinking upon which the level of public thought and the increase of charm in our society and in our letters ultimately depend." In conclusion he summed up what he thought Mr. Brownell, better than any critic of anything like his eminence, could give to "our somewhat fiercely realistic young people":

"Neither an iconoclast nor a reactionary, he has been steadfastly and consistently a man of intensely contemporary sympathies and interests; he has stood unflinchingly for reason as our supreme instrument; eminent in culture, he has valued the past as it could be used in the present; a convinced democrat, he has criticized the brutality of our individualism and has commended the study of French equality and the French social instinct as the means to refine our own society and to make it more delectable; no lover of negation, the main tendency of his work is positive and affirmative; in every field of art he has turned from academic vacuity and romantic insubstantiality to welcome the modern passion for reality; as a critic of letters he has formulated and applied standards which are exacting but both intelligible and attainable; in his own writing he has striven with high seriousness to exemplify the virtues of an idealistic realism; he has declared that the highest service of criticism 'is to secure that the true and the beautiful, and not the ugly and the false, may in wider and wider circles of appreciation be esteemed to be the good.' If these are not the ideals of the younger generation, so much the worse for the younger generation. But I think they are—or that they will be as soon as the younger generation knows itself."

Mr. Brownell expressed with characteristic modesty his

gratification and his special pleasure at Sherman's recognition of the bond that joined them.

(*From W. C. Brownell*)

Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers,
597 Fifth Avenue, New York,
Jan. 10, 1923.

DEAR MR. SHERMAN:

"I have been studying how I may compare" etc., but I have been in kinder hands than my own and I give it up. I have found it difficult to devise any adequate succession of words to express the feelings with wh. I have read your essay. It is little to say there is no word of it I would change. It would be ungracious to let what little modesty I now have left suggest that you have made a "master" out of one whose ambition has been to come as near as might be to being a master workman, in a not too numerous series of attempts. And that is the only modification I can see worth my attending to. I will content myself by saying that, except for the exalted position of the niche into which you have got me, I am enough able to go along with you to feel in a sense "smoked out," and to feel glad that you have accepted as achievement what has been endeavor. Perhaps no one else can so well discern the gap between these two as one's self. And of course your discovery of what I have long earnestly hoped you would sometime recognize, that we belong instinctively in the same camp, is, I may say, an intimate pleasure to me. At an age when one is perhaps fatuous to think he is "still in the ring" at all, to be championed, and assured that he is a champion, by the authority he considers *the* champion, is a rosy delight. I feel as if just the brevet I should have chosen had been handed down to me by the mature judgment of one thirty years riper and richer, *ipso facto* of coming later.

I remember the grin—or twinkle—with which Arthur Sedgwick told me Godkin had told him that he thought his (S's) *Atlantic* article on him (G) the best thing he had done. But I must say—naïveté or not—the essay seems to me a remarkable and a beautiful piece of work—just lovely in the way the rhythm keeps pace with the elaborate and yet thoroughly simplified

organization. Written about X, Y, or Z it would be quite as interesting—or almost quite! (What a "handy little fellow" the "!" is, as Lincoln said of the semi-colon!)

. . . I feel that I have too long delayed in writing you of the beatitude I am now savoring—seriously, my dear fellow, if I may "overflow" so familiarly as thus to address one who has also something of an august side for me, this is one of the very nicest things that ever happened to me, and I have the variety and quality of sensations that appropriately accompany such an event.

Sincerely yours,
W. C. Brownell.

After seeing the essay set up in type he wrote with even greater feeling: "I forbear to try to express the very, very deep satisfaction—joy, rather—that you have made to vibrate in my septuagenarian bosom. I am not so fearfully shy but fear to overdo it—which you would not like and which might impair to some extent the beautiful illusions you have as to me; I tread softly lest I disturb those, they are such a permanent brace to me and set before me in a personal and therefore unusually vivid way 'the mark of a high calling.'"[12]

It was not found practicable to publish the central part of the essay in a magazine before putting it into the *Modern Students' Library*, but the preliminary portion, with the title "For the Higher Study of American Literature," found a place in the *Yale Review*. It is an argument for assigning a much more important place in our universities to the study of American writers, on the ground that native authors, even if they are somewhat inferior, are much better able than foreign ones—even if they are English—to express for us "the individual adventures and the social sense of men and women who live under our own national conditions."

[12]April 27, 1923.

CHAPTER XXV

"AMERICANS" AND "GENIUS OF AMERICA"

A COMPLETE account of the literary work done by Sherman in the years covered by the last two chapters would include a number of other essays illustrating his central interest in the trend of American life. He surveyed the careers of two distinguished immigrants—Andrew Carnegie and Oscar Straus—recognizing the wholeheartedly and aspiringly democratic purposes of both, and in the latter especially admiring a man who attempted "to make the ideal of civility effective in a world which is still more than half barbaric." He illustrated the power of tradition in the creation of a nationally distinctive speech by a suggestive essay on "American Style" (a theme he thought of expanding into a book), and he composed for French consumption a paper on "Contemporary Movements and Literary Tradition in the United States." Against the mockery of the new generation he spoke a friendly word in behalf of the less aggressive generation that was passing away. "It may be due to a Chinese prejudice," he said, "but I have never been able to join with any great alacrity of spirit in the nearly universal contemporary sport of deriding the classics, or indeed any perpetuated mold in which the human spirit of a bygone age or generation expressed all that it knew of grace or charm or power." Of course in writing thus of Brander Matthews and his contemporaries he exposed himself to the charge of being one of the ridiculed "mossbacks." It might, on the other hand, be viewed as an illustration of that "universal" sympathy in which some of his critics thought him deficient, a sympathy that he also extended good-humoredly to the facile essayists—the "Literary Light Brigade"—upon whom in his austerer moments he was inclined to look just a little scornfully. A half dozen long reviews, including an "omnibus" review of thirty

volumes of new verse,[1] an essay on "The Disraelian Irony" and an address on "Literature and the Government of Men" round out the substance of Sherman's writing before the end of 1922.

The last two subjects had a special fascination for his mind, mingled in the case of Disraeli with just a suggestion of repulsion for the Voltaire and Don Juan in his make-up. What fascinated him in Disraeli was "the absolutely aweless intellect of the emancipated Jew," a subtly civilized mind exerting its power successfully over a nation of coarser grain. A bond of sympathy between him and the English Jew exists in the latter's phrase, "Imagination governs mankind." That was the idea which Sherman was now elaborating in his paper on "Literature and the Government of Men"—a theme, as he wrote to Mr. Ellery Sedgwick,[2] which he had been trying to express since he was sixteen. It was a statement of the utility of literature, of the part played by the master writers in determining the national character and influencing the behavior of people, rising to an eloquent contemplation of that "spiritual society, exempt from the limitations of time and space and death" and ending on a note of strong Emersonian liberalism: "The mission of the man of letters is to be at the point where, through the brazen dome of our habits and customs, breaks the thin radiance of new truth. His last and highest function, his divinely dangerous function, committed to him by the great society, is to promulgate the new law in despite of the old one, and, by every power of imaginative representation at his command, to make it prevail from end to end of society, and govern in the ideas and emotions of men."[3]

With all his literary activity Sherman was still far from meeting the demands made upon him by insatiable editors and publishers. Among the rejected temptations was a proposal for a History of American Literature. "At the present moment," he wrote to Mr. Harcourt, "I am not keen for binding myself to that kind of a job, desiring rather to have my hands as free as

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[1] *Yale Review*, April, 1921.

[2] September 15, 1921.

[3] This paper was first used as a Phi Beta Kappa address at Leland Stanford University in 1921 and, with a new Introduction, as one of the William Vaughn Moody Lectures at the University of Chicago, May 9, 1922.

possible for the contemporary scene. To keep up at all with current affairs, and at the same time to be devoted to the classroom and to the merely antiquarian researches of the literary historian demands a wider grasp than I have yet attained."[4] With more reluctance he turned aside a suggestion from Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe to write a little book on religion, a sort of *Religio Laici*, as that was among his cherished schemes. In declining an invitation from Mr. Canby to cross swords once more with Mr. Mencken he explains something of his processes in writing and of the pressures to which he was subject.

(*To H. S. Canby*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
Oct. 14, 1922.

DEAR CANBY:

You shall see my hand again!

I have read Mencken's new book, and have not found him essentially changed, except that I think his prose style is improving, and that I note he now praises the Bible. He is still busy clowning on *both sides of every fence*. Something could of course still be said about that.

But on the whole I think I do not wish to say it. For the present I have said about enough on Mencken. He, as usual, is spoiling for a fight, or thinks he is. If he really wants a fight, I'll give him one. On more than one occasion I have offered him grounds for debate. I have even gone so far as to write an article on him, which the *Times* published some time ago, and which I am reprinting in a volume which Scribner will publish this fall. If he wants an encounter, it is his turn to strike. But that is not the same thing as emptying the contents of his garbage bucket on my side of the fence. I don't see my part in that sort of Teutonic harlequinade. So much for that.

As for an article on *anything*, that is a bully proposal. But why do you call on outsiders? You are such a rabbit yourself for the production of ideas that it seems quite needless to turn

[4]September 17, 1922.

elsewhere. My dear Doctor, I am quite serious. I am delighted and weekly astonished to see the freshness and variety of your editorial column. Really, you say all of one's good things just before one sends them in! We have never had a literary paper which reported with such promptness and thoroughness what people are thinking as distinguished from what they are doing. I am mightily pleased with the performance.

I did intend to send you my latest cogitations on morality this summer—as a digression from the steady literary job on which I was engaged between June and October. But the gist of the ideas I had to offer got absorbed somehow into two long essays on which I was then engaged; and I didn't have the energy to find a new form to present them.

I keep a note-book in which I write a beautiful new thought about twice a week, waiting for a summer vacation to develop it into 6000 words.

You write yours down in the "Literary Review" at once, developed to 1000 words. That is a very pretty talent which I envy you.

To get my beautiful thoughts developed beyond the condition for canning in a private journal is such a racking process in term time, that I have almost given it up, except when the article to be produced fits into a larger plan.

Your *Definitions* came to me a week or so ago, I believe, with your compliments. You were very kind to send it. It is an extraordinarily lively and suggestive book—sound, sympathetic, stimulating, open-eyed—and yet written in the tone of a gentleman. Extraordinary feat. People believed it couldn't be done. Well, it can. Here is the proof.

You see what I mean by applauding your paper.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Having done enough writing in three years to make up the substance of three good volumes, Sherman now turned his attention to the question of how to give the best publicity to his ideas. The problem of his public was very much on his mind. There is this of truth in the charge of "popularity" that was being made against him, that being engaged in a combat, he was anxious to draw as many as possible to his side of the lists. He

was not completely satisfied with the way in which *On Contemporary Literature* had been handled by the publishers, and in the letter to Mr. Brownell, already quoted, he hinted that he would not be averse to making another connection. Mr. Brownell, in behalf of Mr. Scribner, hastened to avail himself of the opening and, alluding to what Sherman was pleased to call his "shaggy" and "Jacksonian" qualities, wrote: "The Scribners have for many years provided me with a home almost in a domestic as well as in the business sense, and I don't need to say that I should never have felt at ease in a Brahminic phalanstery. Even if we were dilettanti of the most approved Castiglione order we should certainly feel a hearty zest in conspiring with *you* in Jacksonian costume. At all events if you stop and think you will realize the abundant reason I myself have had in long wishing that my best friends might publish for you—that you of all writers in your field might be on their list."[5] It did not require much discussion to reach an agreement for the publishing by Scribner's of *Americans*. The other book which Sherman wanted to bring out immediately was one for which his three *Atlantic* essays were to serve as nucleus. He therefore thought it proper to give the first chance to the Atlantic Monthly Press. Owing to Mr. Sedgwick's illness and the indecision of other responsible persons, this volume also went to Scribner's and from this time on Sherman looked upon that firm as his regular publishers. He never had any complaint to make of his treatment there, and his relations with its representatives were to the end of his life of the pleasantest.

He showed a notable anxiety at this time about the public influence of his work. Writing Mr. M. A. DeWolfe Howe, he tells him of the various publishers who have solicited him for a volume of essays, quoting an appreciative extract from one of them on "The Point of View in American Criticism" and adding that "this is only a specimen of similar letters about this article that I have received from New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, West Virginia, Missouri, North Dakota, Utah, California, etc., and that it has been the subject of extensive editorial comment, to my knowledge, in New York City, Chicago, and Tacoma. And the same thing is true of the other

[5]March 14, 1922.

Atlantic essays, one of which indeed has already provoked a book by way of reply."[6]

A letter to Mr. E. K. Rossiter is of interest in this connection.

(*To E. K. Rossiter*)

December 14, 1922.

DEAR MR. ROSSITER:

What writers need more than anything else in this country is an intelligently exacting public. If to its intelligence and its exactions it could add a bit of kindly appreciation now and then, the situation would be ideal. You have all these virtues of the desired public, but how few there are of you! You are so few that one almost forgets that you exist. One gets in the way of thinking of the well-intentioned but illiterate youths who write for the papers as constituting the public. And one gets in the way also of trying to say things that these illiterate youths will understand. And then when one discovers that one's book has fallen into the hands of a reader like you, one is ashamed—one blushes for all its crudenesses and banalities. The only writers who can be safe from such shames are men who have always written for the Century Club, men like W. C. Brownell; but then there aren't any men like Mr. Brownell nowadays. So we are in a rather bad way, aren't we?

Among the fine feathers in this head-dress which you attribute to our "chief," I will always reckon this letter of yours. You are doubtless a far better Emersonian than I am. At any rate it makes me shudder to learn what a collector of "feathers" you are, and how clearly you have in mind not only the good things, the inexhaustible good things of Emerson himself but all the fine things that have been said about him also. What you say about his continuous working on the minds of living men I respond to with the liveliest sense of its truth. That sort of immortality is not in the least a confection of the rhetoricians, but, as I think, quite the most substantial and desirable kind of eternal life that we are capable of conceiving. Every few years since I was in high school I have written an essay attempting

[6]November 18, 1922.

to say so in a realistic fashion. At the present time I have another book in the hands of a publisher in which I have another "go" at the same task. And since you are sharpshooting in my direction, I cannot but hope you will keep an eye out for that.

If some of you gentlemen whose private stock is so rich, and who write to your "private friends" such sugared sonnets, would receive the public into your favor and confidence, the rest of us would sit contentedly by, and watch, and applaud. But if you *will* take the spectators' seats, we can only say, you are superlative spectators. A letter like yours makes one want to deserve such applause. I will quote you again what I have already quoted from our Chief: "He is my friend who makes me do what I can."

With many thanks and kind regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Sherman also manifested a lively concern in the advertising and the sales of his new books, writing several times on the subject to Mr. Perkins. In connection with the publication of *The Genius of America* a question arose about the inclusion or modification of the essay on "The Superior Class," the subject of which was a Scribner author. Sherman was conciliatory but defended his position successfully.

(*To Maxwell E. Perkins*)

1116 Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
January 21, 1923.

DEAR MR. PERKINS:

The new batch of proof has not yet arrived; but I have meditated overnight on your letter with reference to the article on "The Superior Class." Let me assure you, in the first place, that I don't belong to the "haughty" class of writers; but am truly glad to know that intelligent eyes are going over the manuscript, and to receive suggestions with reference to any desirable amendments.

I don't make out exactly what you want done with this

article. If merely to tone it down by the alteration of a few words or phrases here and there, that can be easily done; I recall two or three "strong" words which can be diluted. If you mean that the article "got by" without any of you noticing it, and that its presence embarrasses you—please say so frankly. I will consider that.—You refer to the unfavorable comment made at the time of its first appearance. I am not unaware of that. I believe that Mr. G. (with whom I taught at California in the following summer) used the word "asininity." And I am perfectly conscious that my treatment of a woman-writer lays me open to charges, on ordinary grounds, of discourtesy such as "one does not show" to the ladies. With a lively sense of this fact, I kept this article in my drawer for some months before I published it, in order to be perfectly sure that I meant just what I said. And at the present time my feeling is that the only really "nasty" things in it are the things which I *quote* from Mrs. Gerould.—I rather dislike to characterize her doctrine as "snobbism," and if that word offends you, I can find a substitute for it. But I remark at the same time that it is almost a *quotation* from her own banner.

I don't quite feel that the essay is a mere personal skit. I rather cling to it because it treats one of several current attitudes of mind which, in my opinion, make for bitter social friction and dangerous class cleavage. Mrs. G. keeps stoutly on in that vein: see her article on "us old Washingtonians"—or some such theme—in the January *Century*, I think. Other people of importance write in the same vein, but no one else so unblushingly reveals and flaunts the sense of social superiority—her chief inspiration as essayist. Mr. Brownell in his beautiful essay on Emerson has expressed with fine delicacy of phrase what he thinks of such displays. I have simply brought his criticism to bear upon a contemporary writer—in language plain enough to be understood by men in the street.—That is my general feeling about the purpose of this article. But as I have said, I am open to conviction as to its demerits. . . .

P. S. If a lady goes for you with a hatchet in a mob, does the hatchet acquire the sex of the lady?

Americans and *The Genius of America* were published within a few months of each other. In the former there is a greater body

of writing that should endure than in any other single book of Sherman's. Only the first two topics, "Mr. Mencken" and "Tradition," owe their being to a controversial impulse, while one or two others, such as Joaquin Miller and Andrew Carnegie, are of doubtful vitality. But the essays on Franklin, Emerson, Hawthorne, Whitman, Roosevelt, the Adamses, and Mr. Paul Elmer More are as solidly based as they are brilliantly written. The portraits are all focused in relation to a clear ideal of national character, which gives an intellectual and moral unity to the collection, and Sherman's power of psychological analysis shows to the greatest advantage in the individual studies. In *The Genius of America* a larger proportion of the contents is the outcome of conflicts with opposing points of view or is composed in the spirit of the lay sermon. These circumstances, while they do not affect their immediate value, are bound to detract from the ultimate appeal of many of the essays. However, the book contains two of his most permanently interesting papers—"The Point of View in American Criticism" and "Literature and the Government of Men." The large grasp of a significant idea in the one and the emotion and eloquence of the other carry with them as much of the promise of survival as anything he ever wrote.

As a result of these two books Sherman was for about six months pretty steadily under the eye of the reviewers. In general he had reason to be content with their reception. They were noticed widely and at considerable length throughout the country and treated as important events in American criticism. Moreover, there was evidence that they were reaching that very group of younger writers which was the object of his solicitude. On many sides there were exclamations of surprise at the liberal spirit pervading them. One even heard references to Sherman as "the white hope of the younger generation." Sometimes the recognition that he was not in alliance with the forces of reaction was rather grudging and accompanied with serious qualifications. He was told by one reviewer, for instance, that he had made some progress but still had very far to go and that he did not understand Croce and Spingarn, and by another that he was not as conservative as his enemies painted him but was "downright dishonest" in his quotation from Mr. Lewisohn and should take lessons in breadth of sympathy from Mr. R. M.

Lovett. Both these reviews were from Chicago[7] and represent a little improvement in the spirit of fair play over five years earlier. On occasion his general object was approved and he was invited to show his sincerity by joining the leaders who were carrying the banner of Randolph Bourne.[8] There was also a certain amount of inveterate, but hardly reasoned, hostility. Mr. Ernest Boyd's vicious and unscrupulous assault upon *The Genius of America* as "Ku Klux Criticism" hurt Sherman chiefly because it appeared in the *Nation* (then under the literary editorship of Mr. John Macy), where he felt he had a right to fairer treatment.[9] From Mr. Mencken nothing more was to be expected than some evasive flippancy such as calling the book safe and respectable and making fun of its "patriotic purpose."[10] The *Dial* published a purely derisive review of *Americans* by D. H. Lawrence,[11] which was more than offset by its appreciation of *The Genius of America* a few months later. "The spirit and content of the book," it said, "are delightful. There is great wisdom—not merely knowledge—tolerance without sentimentalism, and keen satire where satire is due. . . . His demands are sincerity, sense, and ideals, qualities which he himself possesses in a high degree."[12]

Among the friendly critics of the liberal school an objection was now and then raised to the defense of tradition. In the case of Mr. Erskine it was based on a "suspicion" that Sherman would like to exclude all alien cultures from this country and on the feeling that his argument was presented with "the misleading flavor of personal innuendo."[13] The justice of such criticism can be appraised in the light of what has been said on this point in an earlier chapter, but at any rate it represented an honest difference of opinion and was not made in a spirit of fault-

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[7]Respectively, Llewellyn Jones in Chicago *Evening Post*, July 13, 1923, and Harry Hansen in Chicago *Daily News*, December 6, 1922.

[8]Newton Arvin, *Freeman*, July 18, 1923.

[9]June 20, 1923. This was outdone in sheer spitefulness only by the irresponsible and short-lived organ of literary impudence, the Chicago *Literary Times*, in its review of the same book, May 15, 1923.

[10]*Smart Set*, March, 1923.

[11]March, 1923.

[12]July, 1923.

[13]*Bookman*, March, 1923.

finding. There was also much exception taken to the definition of Puritanism, not always on the best grounds; one or two reviewers deplored the tendency of the Roosevelt essay, and some censured quite severely his treatment of Mr. Mencken—the only part of either book which was called in question on literary grounds. But with all these strictures taken into account, the total effect produced by the voices from this quarter was one of approval and admiration.

On the conservative side there was somewhat less joy over these two books than over *On Contemporary Literature*. There was a tendency on the part of some older people to shake their heads just a little, but in the main Sherman's old supporters were cordial. Such expressions as "the most influential of English-speaking critics,"[14] "the most soundly stimulating figure in American Criticism,"[15] "one of our best scholar-thinkers,"[16] occurred frequently. Professor Pattee emphasized the significance of this "new masculine voice from the rising Mid-West that is destined to dominate more and more now, even in matters of culture and art, original, unconventional, compelling," and was cheered at finding "that the pioneer of these new Western critics is one who is so evenly balanced, so catholic, so cultured."[17] There were not a few who perceived the emergence of a writer qualified to mediate between contending groups. In the estimates of individual essays the volume of praise might have satisfied the most insatiable of authors. Half a dozen of the studies in *Americans*—the Emerson, Whitman, Hawthorne, the Adamses, Franklin, the Conversation with Mr. More—were singled out in turn by different reviewers as superlative on their subject or in their kind. On the purely literary excellence of the two books readers of the most diverse sympathies were practically agreed.

In view of the recognition, even in adverse circles, of the liberal tendency of his writings, Sherman was decidedly taken aback when he read in the *Century Magazine* for August, 1923, a discussion of *The Genius of America* by Carl Van Doren very definitely aligning him with the reactionaries. The counts in the

[14]H. S. Canby, "Literary Review" of the *Evening Post*, July 1, 1923.

[15]R. M. Alden, San Francisco *Journal*, July 1, 1923.

[16]Richard Burton, Minneapolis *Journal*, June 24, 1923.

[17]*Yale Review*, April, 1924.

indictment were numerous and specific: (1) His latest definition of the Puritans contradicted his characterization of them in *Matthew Arnold.* (2) He had undergone a great change from his early revolutionary, irreverent days owing to "a weariness after controversy, a longing for security among the wrangles of the senses and the debates of the passions, a desire to live safely in some great and good tradition." (3) From being a foe to chauvinism, the war had brought him to a point "where his writing might be cited, though not always justly, to give aid and comfort to chauvinists." (4) He was bigoted. "He who had defended the classics against all challengers by reminding the challengers that they were little better than sophomores after all, now answered the critics of America by reminding them that they were only Jews or Germans, clowns or internationalists, and as such were incapable of understanding, as the purer strains could do, the great meaning, the great goal of the republic." (5) He was hostile to the radicals of his own day and contented himself with singing the praises of *dead* radicals, and he might be asked, "By what right does a moralist who instinctively resists all innovation, venture to sit down and take his ease by the side of a Whitman who spent his life fighting official censorship and academic neglect?" (6) He had resolutely set his face against every novel scheme for governing mankind or for solving the problems of economic life. (7) As a critic he had shown his limitations by failure to discover a "single beginner" in the arts and he had praised only one new reputation.

Summing up the charges, Van Doren spoke of the contradiction between Sherman's passion for striking every new head and his passion for arguing that the quest for perfection is the driving force of life, and concluded as follows: "Certain of his former readers have given up hope, have indeed ceased to be his readers in the confidence that he is with the old guard forever, and is forever committed to the morose regiments of Americanism and fundamentalism. Certain of his more loyal readers, despite the snubs they have suffered from him, still hold to the belief that he will some day integrate his instinct and his reason and will become the voice and guide which his capacities could make him; that he will promote youth to the side of age in the company of things worth reverence."

Against this formidable censure Sherman entered a justifiable protest by the first mail.

(*To Carl Van Doren*)

Dunewood,
Manistee, Michigan,
July 21, 1923.

DEAR CARL:

I have just read your article in the *Century*. Since it is signed I take the liberty of writing to you about it. This I did not feel at liberty to do after the *Bookman* article, which I did not know the authorship of for a long time, and then only in a very confidential fashion.

The *Century* article is not up to that of your "anonymous" critic. The former was a caricature of much vitality in the drawing. It contained a fair number of false strokes but little that one could seriously object to in a caricature. I objected only to a sentence or so because, as the article seemed to be written by an intimate acquaintance, this sentence or so were rather embarrassingly misrepresentative. But for the most part I enjoyed all the twittings. I am never averse to twitting or roasting either, and I have had plenty of both.

In the *Century* article, I find a point or two to think about, and am grateful to have attention called to them. But the main substance of the article strikes me as fairly unsound—in a fashion which seems more like that of my friend Burton Rascoe than like your own sure touch. I mean that it is seriously misrepresentative by imputation to me of positions which I have never taken and of charges which I have never made.

(1) I make no fetish of consistency: *but* there is no inconsistency between my statement in the Arnold book and my present attitude towards the Puritans; nor even, I think, between that original statement and what I said in "What is a Puritan?" That article is not a defense of the historical Puritans but an attempt to preserve and defend what is vital in universal Puritanism. It is as much of an attack on *fossilized* Puritanism as it is an attack on living Puritanism's enemies.

(2) More serious is the intimation that I *ever* followed More in his raids on the "democratic spirit." I praised More for

a certain element in his *ethics*. This in the preface to *Contemp. Lit.* Beyond that, not a word of *discipleship* in that book or elsewhere till the appearance of the article on him in which Rascoe and others maintain that I have repudiated him. I have repudiated nothing that I accepted. I have praised him more in the last article than anywhere else. In fact everything that I have written about him elsewhere than in the "repudiating" article has been an expression of dissent from his Toryism in politics and religion. I haven't changed a hair breadth in that respect from the first.

(3) You say that I have set my face like a flint (or words to that effect) against economic and political change. So far as I know I have never uttered a word on economic change in print except to express my sympathetic interest in the rising wages of the laboring man. The political change which has interested me most is the League of Nations and the extension of international law. I have also been and am an anti-militarist and anti-imperialist; and have written in that vein at every opportunity, in war time and long before it. I am a believer in the general beneficence of the Volstead Act. I am a believer in birth-control as one of the principal means to the better civilization of the middle and lower classes. I have just published an article dealing somewhat with the censorship, an article which has just been strongly denounced by Mr. Sumner; and I have never supported any act of censorship of the press; though I do not promise to adhere to my past record, I do not yet see occasion to depart from it.—What is the basis of saying that I have set myself against economic or political change? And above all what is the basis for intimating that I have changed allegiance in defending the main business of democracy, i.e., to obtain a better life for all the people? (So far as democratic *government* is concerned, I have actually said little. I mean that I have not set up as a theorist or critic with reference to the fundamental political form or technique of the State. But whatever I have said has been in word and feeling in line with the position taken in the Whitman article.)

(4) I have not repudiated my war "rages." You said in your *Bookman* article that I was rather ashamed of them. I am not. Mencken not long ago "threatened" to republish my "Allied Ideals," or whatever the name of that piece was. I haven't the

slightest objection to anyone's republishing it or anything else that I wrote in war-time—or any honest ungarbled quotation from it.

(5) Finally, who the devil have I been "*snubbing*"? *Snubbing* is one of the things that I have never tried. And what you can have in mind by that last paragraph "beats" me.

Please understand that I am not writing this to you as Editor of the *Century*. I don't care a rip what the Editor of the *Century* thinks or writes about me. He or any other editor may think and write as they please without correction from me.—But as an old acquaintance I can't help asking you whether you believe that stuff that the Editor of the *Century* writes.

Yours as ever,
STUART.

How, now, did it actually stand between Sherman and the writers of "the old guard" to whom, his friend feared, he was irrevocably committed? Professor Babbitt and Mr. More at least, if they are among the persons referred to, saw no evidence of strengthening bonds of alliance with Sherman in the new books. On the contrary, both wrote with distinct regret at the widening of the rift between them. The acknowledgment of *Americans* by the former was decidedly cool in tone:

"If the interest it inspires in me, though great, is somewhat less than that inspired by your *Contemporary Literature*, the reason is that its main theme is not, like the main theme of that volume, humanism, but idealism, an idealism that is Jeffersonian rather than Platonic. Herein I fancy that I am far from representative. Many Americans are getting shaky about their idealism of late; your eloquent defense of it should hearten them and gain for you a considerable following. Men like More and myself, on the other hand, who take a frankly anti-humanitarian attitude, condemn ourselves to a comparative isolation. You might, to be sure, if it came to a sharp brush between the humanists and humanitarians, find yourself in the position of Mr. Pickwick when he tried to mediate between the two angry combatants. I do not, however, see many signs of any such development. What is more likely is a continuation of the present conflict between the idealists and the Machiavellian realists

or 'hard guys' with the outlook for the idealists rather uncertain.

"You seem to me to have put a gusto into your paper on Mencken that is not common these days; so far as I know the personage, I should say that he has got about what he deserves. Your paper on P. E. M., on the other hand, though brilliant and amusing, strikes me as out of focus in certain essential particulars. Perhaps it is I that am out of focus. The gap that is opening between you and More is plainly a wide one and involves indeed some of the fundamentals of the inner life. After all you must go your own gait and it is not for More or me or anyone else to demur. My only regret is that we can not present a more united front to the enemy. . . ."[18]

Mr. More was equally candid in expressing his disappointment at Sherman's falling below his best standard, observing, "Perhaps my judgment is a little warped by my failure to make out just what you are aiming at and just how you propose to amend democracy by accepting it at its own self-appraisal," and prophesying trouble for him if "the Jews of New York and Chicago" should get on his tracks.[19] He was a good deal better pleased with the second book, but still hostile to some of its basic notions:

"It seems to me a finer and sounder piece of work than the *Americans*, which did not altogether please me, and which I criticized, perhaps indiscreetly. I begin to believe that you are a better preacher than a critic—a fault, or virtue, by the way, which has sometimes been attributed also to myself. I can't quite stomach your view of Whitman, you have certainly said some startling things about my friend Socrates, and I am not fully persuaded about your Mark Twain. But as a preacher of righteousness, I take off my hat to you. Oh, I could criticize the new book in places—*c'est mon métier, ça.* I think there is some confusion in the last essay on what is 'new' and what is 'eternal'; the two are not always identical. I think in your laudable desire to reinstate the Puritan, you grant the gentleman certain traits which are doubtfully his own. I am not sure that in your shrewd turning of the tables on the malodorous

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[18]February 18, 1923.

[19]December 28, 1922.

Freudians you have not dealt over-kindly with the great American public—though I hope you are right. It is a little hard for me to feel so acutely the spiritual yearnings whose voice you hear in the discontent of our disillusioned youth. Perhaps I am growing deaf—or was born so. But all this is by the way; I am only trying to keep up my rôle of unsatisfiable critic. The book as a whole gave me a real thrill of pleasure. It is good and clear and strong and sharply pointed."[20]

When Mr. Frank Jewett Mather added his protest to that of the other two men at Sherman's withdrawal from pure criticism to "a championship of democracy *per se*," the latter made a reply which was aimed at the three critics simultaneously. It will be noted that there is here no complaint about being misunderstood, but an unequivocal throwing down of the gauntlet. Sherman was now completely outside the camp of Professor Babbitt and Mr. More.

(*To Frank Jewett Mather*)

1116 Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
January 13, 1923.

DEAR MATHER:

Your "Dutch" admonition I enjoyed very much. I find that my capacity for enjoying adverse comment is unlimited. *Crede mihi experto.* More, too, has oftener than once warned me that I was going to the devil. Babbitt never writes, not even to acknowledge a present; but occasionally he sends word by some vagrant student that he fears I am slipping into the gutter. (The trouble with Babbitt is, that, in the path he treads, there is only *room* for one; the rest *must* be in the gutter.)

I appreciate their apprehensive solicitude; and now yours. It stimulates one to be on guard. And I always rejoice at even a line, from these gentlemen, which assures me that though my limbs languish in hell, my writing is bad, and my ideas damnable, I have not wholly lost their interest nor their tearful compassion. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

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[20]April 30, 1923.

I am perplexed, however, by my inability to find the wounds! After my Dutch friend's thundering index, I find the text less illuminating than I had hoped. I don't know this writer O. S. Marden, on whom you rely so heavily to terrify and taunt me. And I have to remonstrate against your suggestion of a peculiar virtue—peculiar to the redeemed remnant—in refusing lectures and the arts of popularity! As I recall the matter, I refused enough lectures last year to make my living, and appeared on the platform, out of town, not more than three or four times—and for the reason that you present in your own case—namely, that I wish to go about my own business of thinking my own thoughts and presenting them to those who can follow them as they are presented.

I do not feel myself to be in the "muddle" in which you enjoy placing me. On the contrary I have never before been so clear about what I want to do, and about what in my—to be sure, quite insignificant—way, I stand for. In the steady wafting of reproaches from your trinitarian conclave, there is something obscure and mysterious. The charges on which I am to be sacked and dropped into the Styx are like the proceedings of a Turkish inquisition.

I have agreed with More and Babbitt at a great many points. But I have never embraced with any completeness More's metaphysical doctrines: I don't understand them.

As moral sages, I think them right at many vital points, but as leaders of the intellectual and literary movement at the present time:

1. They keep too far from the scene of action—they too much disdain the actual conflict which is going on.

2. They interest themselves in too restricted aspects of literature—as if nothing else were of any importance.

3. They are too remorselessly negative.

4. In their ultimate position, they are both dogmatic and mystical, to an extent which makes it impossible for one to understand or follow them, to say nothing of expounding them. That is precisely why they are not exerting the influence which their own doctrines—some of which I sharply dissent from—are entitled to exert.

Whatever small service I may perform in defending what

we all agree should be defended, must lie in finding a rational and discussible basis—at points where they refuse to discuss, and Babbitt erects his *chevaux-de-frise* of arbitrary "definitions" warranted to eviscerate every gizzard and break every neck born into this disastrous world since Aristotle; while More retreats into a blinding white mist of Platonism, where God himself would think twice before pursuing.

Just a word with reference to your comment on democracy—the democracy of a man of letters. All that I can say *briefly* is, that I don't agree with you at that point. I mean that there is no question at the present time requiring more thinking, calling for a more definite stand, and demanding more *explicit* expression from the man of letters than precisely the question: What does democracy mean to me? A failure to deal honestly and intelligently with that question strikes me, at any rate, as a failure at pretty nearly the most important task of critical leadership, at a task which, for an orderly mind, underlies and precedes all the rest.

Babbitt's treatment of the question is relatively cautious and, to me, not very illuminating. More's treatment is as incautious as that of Coriolanus, and to me it is deeply dissatisfying—as I have said, with reasons, in *Americans*. There are elements of truth and dire necessity in his total apprehension of the subject; but I think he has hitherto failed to present these elements as true and necessary and therefore to be accepted. He has presented them rather willfully and arrogantly in the fashion of an old Roman, and he has hurt himself with his own blade—whereas his real mission was to undertake a mild and reasonable adjustment of the true and necessary to the desired and possible.

As for the distinction between "Humanism" and "Humanitarianism," of which you are all three so fond, and with which as a bludgeon, you all three so much delight to beat your enemies—*and* your friends, down into the pit of hell, I, too, think that a distinction may be made, that many distinctions may be made, profitably in that territory; but I think these distinctions should be made, can safely be made, only with a much more reasonable and humane temper than either Babbitt or More has brought to the task. Their division of sheep and goats

is made with a sweeping wholesale stroke which I always think more becoming to Jehovah *à la* John Sargent than to a critic of life and letters in the year of grace 1923.

Please scold me again.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

I have no objection to your reporting to More and Babbitt that I think they *may possibly* both be men of humane temper; but that I am very sure neither of them is a reasonable man!

CHAPTER XXVI

ACADEMIC HONORS—NEW THEMES

IN FOLLOWING the closely connected series of Sherman's writings that culminated in the publication of *Americans* and *The Genius of America*, the narrative has passed beyond certain events which call for mention. In the main the year 1922 was one of steady literary activity, in which the brilliantly successful delivery of the William Vaughn Moody Lectures at the University of Chicago was an episode rather than an interruption. The real event of the year was the journey to Williamstown to receive an honorary L. H. D. at the hands of his Alma Mater and to remind her incidentally that she could "improve her education by a certain injection of the 'professional spirit.'"[1] There was always this touch of filial austerity mingled with his genuine affection for the place, and it comes out in the letter which he wrote to Mr. Brownell about this visit.

"The trees and grass and hills were extraordinarily lovely, by nature and a favorable season, and still more, I fancied, by long habit of living in intimacy with the chapel chimes and the academic robes and the fine old pure thin traditional culture of the place. To one coming out of the West, Williamstown presents something like an 'old world charm.' Like Princeton, it has the air of not intending to change much—except in the way of further refinements of its decorum. It has the 'touch of time.' We acquired a new purple and white hood in the Congregational Church;[2] but the 'high spot' for us was on Bald Mountain, where one rainy afternoon we built a fire under the spruces and sent a packet of old letters to Heaven. This ought to interest a young couple who are just getting 'acquent.' These letters were twenty years old."[3]

[1]Letter to Carl Van Doren, June 28, 1922.

[2]The event actually took place in the college chapel.

[3]November 6, 1922.

After a brief visit with his mother in Dorset, Sherman hurried back to Dunewood (stopping for a day to deliver a lecture at Milwaukee-Downer College), in order to avail himself of the precious summer months. This was the only season when he allowed himself to "neglect his university duties." What the conditions were under which he was doing his writing during the college year is indicated by "a sample day" from his diary.

April 25, 1922—A Sample Day.

9:00–9:30. Correct proofs of the 2nd part of my article on Disraeli, and send it to the *Bookman.*

9:30–12:30. Write on "Point of View in Criticism" for my Univ. of Chicago lecture.

12:30–12:40. Lunch.

12:40–1:40. Prepare (recook) lecture on Mrs. Browning.

1:40–1:50. Read chapter of girl's thesis on T. Hardy.

2:00–3:00. Deliver lecture on Mrs. Browning.

3:00–4:00. Conduct session on *Marius the Epicurean.*

4:00–5:30. Interviews with Scott, Brightfield, Alice Carter, etc. Give examination on Arnold and correct paper. Write one-half dozen letters. Read and sign reports. File letters. Write absence slips.

7:00–9:00. Cæsar with John. Read his English theme. Converse on French poetry with him. Read aloud Tennyson's "Virgil" and "Frater Ave atq. Vale." Read 130 page thesis on Crabbe. Read 30 pp. of thesis on H. James. Read "Literary Review."

Several letters of this year to his mother reveal a beautiful tact, a sweetness, and a tenderness, which was almost entirely concealed even from those who thought they knew him well.

(*To Mrs. Ada P. Sherman*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
April 16, 1922.

Dear Mother:

Yesterday your beautiful letter came with its wise, kind thoughts about religion. To-day, after the long days of cold and

rain the sun came out and the sky is blue. It is Easter morning; and in celebration the cherry-tree by the East window has suddenly burst into white blossoms. I associate its beauty and fragrance with your letter; and it does me for an Easter service better than going to church—though Ruth has gone to-day to the little Unitarian Chapel. The message she brought home was that all might come to the altar and take hands who loved God and their fellow men. I think that is what you meant by saying that you believe still what you believed in the old days when you copied Whittier's poems into your notebooks. Many of the things which the old theologians thought were very important for salvation do not seem important at all to us nowadays. But, on the other hand, kindness and fidelity, and fortitude, and an effort to make this world a better and more interesting place to live in are just as important as they ever were. We begin to see that these things were the inner vital realities of our religion; and the intellectual creeds which we sometimes found so hard to understand were only a kind of container intended to protect and preserve these vital activities of the heart and mind. As a matter of fact the "containers" did not always do the service for which they were designed. Too frequently they soured the milk of human kindness within. It was because you so early saw what was vital in religion and so firmly adhered to that, and let the rest go—it was for this reason, I think, that you have endured your experience so bravely and well, and kept in sympathy with the changing times, and never got out of touch with your own children, but have always been, after they grew up, a real contemporary of them all—only wiser and much better than any of them.

As you grow in grace from day to day, I notice with pleasure the deepening and widening of your sense of humor! Your notion that in Paradise you would like to get the children together for Thanksgiving and Christmas, strikes me as the best thing I have heard for years.—You mean sort of physico-spiritually together, of course. People who write to one another, and care for one another and think about one another are already spiritually together. It's only a matter of the actual physical interval between them. And that is rapidly disappearing, as science progresses. We have already, for example, installed in several of our Western universities a wireless talking

apparatus by which university news, concerts, and presently lectures will be sent all over the state, and all the farmer will have to do in the evening to attend a university course, will be to take down the receiver of his wireless and "listen in." When the thing is in good order, and all the lectures have been "canned" in Victrola records, the professors can all go off and play, or go off and die, if they like, and all that really "mattered" of them will live forever and vibrate nightly in the air.

John is much interested in wireless this year and spends a good deal of his time making wireless apparatus. He, if he lives, will see the day when all these things shall come to pass. As the machines are not yet perfected I still find it necessary to go on talking in the old way; and in fact have been at it pretty hard in this short Easter recess getting ready a couple of lectures to give in Chicago early in May.

Love to you all, and specially to you.

Affectionately,
STUART.

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
Dec. 1, 1922.

DEAR MOTHER:

Your last letter showed you in the midst of selling your house. I haven't heard yet whether the deed is done, so I can't tell exactly what emotion to "register," as the movie-actors say. In my old age I rather try to register content with whatever happens in an inevitable way. That seems to be a pretty good formula. Indeed, it seems to be a somewhat modernized way of saying, "Thy will be done," doesn't it? If the sale didn't come off, why you have still the old mansion. If it did come off, and you got a good reasonable price for it, then you should fix your mind on the satisfactions of that. Besides, you are having the fun of building another snuggery, and that is something to think about and occupy one's self with.

As for the books, I don't know any better advice than to say why don't you or Kitty put up a row of the shelving and stock up the live stuff, the files of magazines, and anything else that is worth while. Possibly you could get twenty or thirty

dollars for the bound magazines, possibly a little more. I don't know how many volumes are left. If I had a big house, I should like to take over the bound magazines myself, since I have been going into American literature a good deal lately, but I haven't space in my library now for the books I have, so what's the use?

If you want to dispose of any of the furniture that you think I'd like to get, let me know what you are asking for it, and I'll send you a bid.

I had this A. M. an invitation to teach in the University of Colorado next summer; but have just declined it. I spend a good deal of time this year declining to do things which interfere with my purpose of getting some books published. My book *Americans* was published last week. I'll send you a copy when mine come. I had to-day an invitation to speak at the Chicago Williams-Alumni banquet in the Spring—with President Garfield the other luminary. I haven't decided what to do about that yet. I have also just declined invitations to speak in St. Louis, and Chicago, and at the University of Michigan. Declining isn't an interesting occupation, but it helps fill up time.

Has John returned from California yet? And to where?

Affectionately,

STUART.

On February 22, 1923, the American Academy of Arts and Letters dedicated its permanent home and elected Sherman to the place in its membership vacated by the death of Thomas Nelson Page. Mr. Brownell and Mr. More were evidently the prime movers in this action. The secretary, Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson, informed Sherman that he was the youngest member of their august body. The news, when it became public, was received with general approval, but in some quarters a certain dubiousness was expressed as to the mood in which the honor would be received by Sherman. Perhaps those who raised the doubts had noticed in an essay of his, printed a few months before the election,[4] the following passage:

"In the interior of a national academy there broods the quiet of a club organized by old field marshals. Its membership is made up for the most part of men who are remembering, not

[4] "Brander Matthews and the Mohawks," New York *Times* "Book Review," October 29, 1922. See *Points of View*, p. 256.

fighting, their campaigns. In the judgment of their peers they have reached the head of their professions. They have passed through the cold spring of experimentation and the dusty summer of struggle and unrecognized achievement to that clear autumnal season in which one writes one's memoirs, and composes tributes to one's departing comrades, and turns an eye of curiosity and unenvious welcome upon the promising work of younger men."

There was indeed something ironic in the bestowal on Sherman of this kind of recognition just as he was actually setting his course away from the literary elders and seeking an alliance with the young. His head was not altogether easy under the crown. "Academy," he wrote to Professor Thorndike, "—after one is in it, it seems to me almost a duty to leave off being even 'academic'—perhaps to wear khaki and a sombrero."[5] This explains, too, the note of reserve in the letter acknowledging the congratulations of President Kinley.

(*To President Kinley*)

March 1, 1923.

President David Kinley,
355 Administration Building,
Urbana, Illinois.

Dear President Kinley:

I thank you heartily for your letter about the election to the Academy. It has been comparatively easy to please those remote gentlemen in New York, who don't know what a poor creature one actually is. But to please those shrewd critics, one's own colleagues and townsmen—*hoc opus, hic labor est.*

Buttons and badges and memberships in things, as a matter of fact, have never meant much to me—playthings to amuse one's age when one grows tired of work. As long as there is any inner drive left, all that one desires, so I feel most of the time, is simply an opportunity to bear one's fruit, such as it is.

All the same, a cordial word from another man who values ribbons at about the same rate, and toils right on with eye fixed on the thing signified rather than on the sign—this has a warming effect; and it reminds one to go and do likewise. That

[5]April 1, 1923.

helps to develop within our own community a sense that there are, contrary to the Lucretian theory, spirits not unmindful of human affairs—*mentem mortalia tangunt.*

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

To his friends and associates at the university, however, the event gave unqualified satisfaction. A testimonial dinner in the form of a "surprise party," to which Professor Ernest Bernbaum applied all his organizing skill, was arranged at the University Club on the evening of April 7th. There were tributes by colleagues interspersed with the reading of letters from distinguished writers and humanists who had been asked to express their sentiments for this occasion. In the former the eulogy was saved from excessive solemnity by the liberties which personal friendship and affection allowed itself to indulge in. It was natural enough to make play with the comparative youth of the new Academician, as was done by Professor A. S. Pease in the wittiest of that night's speeches, but the gaiety assumes a rather melancholy tinge in the retrospect. Mr. Pease began by defining an academy as a group of distinguished retired men, like Plato's philosophers, practising death and issuing an occasional necrology, or as a sort of distilled and thoroughly aged Phi Beta Kappa, at which the moribund may welcome the *morituri* and discuss prospects for the year's necrology. He then analyzed the vital statistics of the Academy and, showing how for most of its members the three attributes of its motto—"Opportunity, Inspiration, Achievement"—lay in the past, observed that with the advantage of a quarter of a century over the old average the latest "Immortal" should have "opportunity, inspiration, achievement" ahead as well as behind. Then alluding to the sturdy trust in democracy of the new academician, he thus summed up his function: "To bring to this Academy, I will not say ancient, but yet already honorable, this triumph of hope over experience, to bring to the inner circle of the Academy this vigorous faith in democracy and to bring back to democracy and widely diffuse the influence of academic ideals and moral and intellectual standards—in short, to make democracy interesting and safe for the Academy and the Academy vital and helpful for the democracy."

The letters to be read came from Hamlin Garland, Booth Tarkington, G. E. Woodberry, Bliss Perry, Brander Matthews, Paul Shorey, W. C. Brownell, and P. E. More. Some of them greeted Sherman as a young and virile supporter of the old tradition. Professor Shorey recognized that Sherman would probably describe himself as a liberal rather than a conservative, but believed that his influence would be all the greater for his not being "so outspoken and uncompromising a partisan as, for example, Mr. Paul Elmer More and the inditer of this epistle are supposed to be." Mr. Woodberry dwelt on the significance of the election as denoting a greater nationalizing of our literature, its living and recognized spread westward, and commented on the national breadth of Sherman's vision. "In this more modern world," he wrote, "it seems to me that our friend has the right prospects and zenith, sees fair, far and true, in right proportions, and, if fortune be his friend (which heaven grant!) may turn out a 'Dean' (what prouder title in a University!)—Dean of our literature in the many years to come I wish him in the service."

Of greater interest than the rest were the letters of Mr. Brownell and Mr. More as coming from the sponsors and carrying a warmer personal feeling.

(*From W. C. Brownell*)

New York, March 22, 1923.

My dear Sir:

I am obliged for the opportunity you kindly extend to me of joining you in spirit on the occasion of your dinner to Mr. Sherman "in recognition of his election to the Academy of Arts and Letters." As you could not very well, I suppose, arrange for celebrating this event by giving a dinner to that institution, I congratulate you on having done the next best thing. In any case, as Mr. Sherman's proposer, I am bound to rejoice that we have him now safely delivered into our hands; and his election demonstrates this to be a feeling generally shared by the members of the Academy. We rather look to him to modify misconceptions of us, so far as these may exist, not only because—knowing so well how—he has long fought what we be-

lieve to be our battles, but because he has a victorious way with him. This and, if I may so say, his possession of "the goods," give us strong hopes that his accession may be as useful to us as it has been long and amply indicated from our own impartial point of view, speaking with all the modesty appropriate to Academicians. The literary contingent in our company, I am sure, have for some time felt that no one—not already in our ranks—had a better title to be, and some of us may very likely reflect that there were exceptions to the qualifying clause I have used. As a matter of fact, I know of one myself. For nearly fifteen years I have read Mr. Sherman's writings with a warmer feeling than the word "admiration" implies, a sort of responsive ardor and expectant eagerness to meet more than half way what he had to say. I am tempted to be too personal in alluding to it on so general an occasion—"if you know what I mean!" Undoubtedly all his associates *do* know and will permit me to congratulate them also as well as the Academy and its latest and, I suspect, its youngest member, in spite of his extraordinary maturity and the ripeness of his talent. He will, I trust, be a link between us (so far as we are a sea-board fringe!) and yourselves—do something towards putting us on the map, the very middle of it, indeed, which is obviously the Middle West to which he is so loyal.

Sincerely yours,
W. C. Brownell.

Professor Ernest Bernbaum.

(*From P. E. More*)

Princeton, N. J.
March 21, 1923.

Professor Ernest Bernbaum,
University of Illinois.
Dear Mr. Bernbaum,—

I am delighted to hear that the Illinois professors of literature are planning a dinner in recognition of your colleague's election to the Academy, and my only regret is that I shall not be present to observe his countenance when you thrust the crown of immortality on his brow. I might well claim a place among you. It used to be my boast, when I sat in the editorial chair of

the *Nation*, that on my tombstone this epitaph would be engraved: Here lies one who discovered Stuart P. Sherman. And now on my softer chair among the Academicians I should like to have these words inscribed: Here sat one who nominated Stuart P. Sherman. And I trust there is no ill omen in connecting tombstones and academic chairs. Certainly there will be no corpse in the newly filled seat when your distinguished associate deigns to appear among us. Rather, some of us will be saying: *Morituri te victurum salutamus.*

Have you written that very unacademic penman, Mr. H. P. [sic] Mencken, for a letter to be read at your banquet? His reflections would lend some variety to an occasion which may suffer from a monotony of praise. But I forget that the recipient of your honors has wit enough, and some would add wickedness enough, to enliven even the sober hues of eulogy. May he retain both qualities in his zeal for the public welfare, and so prove to a doubting world that it is possible to be at once a lover of what is fair and of good report and a contemner of what is ugly and opprobrious.

Very sincerely yours,
PAUL E. MORE.

The concluding ceremony of the evening was the presentation of a specially bound copy of Joubert's *Pensées*, one of Sherman's favorite books. When Sherman rose to return thanks he was in the unusual predicament of not having a scrap of paper in his hands to refer to. The writer of this chapter had heard him address audiences of all sizes and on almost every kind of occasion, and never had he seen him without a carefully prepared manuscript in his hand, or at least without his speech well memorized when some lecturer had to be introduced. Under no circumstances would he trust to improvisation. Yet now the only embarrassment that he showed was that of sincere emotion at the display of friendship and admiration with which he had been greeted. If he could have withdrawn to his study he might have made use of his wit and his irony wherewith suitably to conceal his true feeling, but under the compulsion of the moment he spoke, slowly to be sure and with a touch of shyness in his manner, but simply and gracefully, without faltering, his phrases apparently under perfect control and the seriousness

of the mood sufficiently lightened to bring the event to a felicitous close.

He described his feelings at this celebration in a letter to Mr. Brownell.

(*To W. C. Brownell*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
April 29, 1923.

Dear Mr. Brownell:

I owe you thanks for so many things and have owed them for so long that only Emerson's injunction against apologizing nerves me to acknowledge so late that I am still an inhabitant of this planet. First, there was the copy of *American Prose Masters* with your corrections which I impudently begged, received, and treasure. Second, there was your vote in the Academy, which, however misguided, brought great pleasure to my colleagues and fellow-townsmen. To me it brought a dire sense of my lack of merit or deserts and a rather oppressive sense which might be translated into words like these: "This means work."—And then there was your delightfully pleasant letter to the toastmaster of our local surprise party, read by one of the brethren who remarked: "This letter is written in the hand of a gentleman and a scholar."—This little surprise party had, with the aid of the letters, very much the effect of a little branch meeting of the Academy itself; and I think it gave us all a new and useful sense of the nearness of our great center of censure and glory to our province. It dropped on me so much like a Christmas present from the blue sky that I have only just begun to recognize how nice it was.

But speaking solely with reference to my own experience, I am sure the Academy should be made much more difficult to enter than it was in 1923. I had supposed before that election was intended as a reward and not as an incentive. Now I am constrained to think of it as a place where gentlemen gamble in futures.

I suffer very little nostalgia for "the land where I am not," but I wished that I might be in New York this spring when you delivered your discourse on *Style*. I hope that it will be out soon

and on my shelf of formative American classics. Since I broke into print in the *Yale Review* with the expressed belief in an American literary discipline, I have been rather painfully impressed by the fewness of our really disciplinary books—I mean books which conduce to the habit of discrimination, using the word as you and Henry James use it. Most of us write with an instrument of about the delicacy of a white-wash brush—I know by looking at my own. And the problem how to be legible for the Democracy without using such an instrument is a nice one for the writer on style to deal with. I wonder if this is the unnamed task that you were at during the winter—or were you midway up still another Alpine height? I am watching for your flag on the summit, where it is wont to fly.

With best regards and good wishes and gratitude,

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

On the day after posting this letter Sherman received from Mr. Brownell the slip on which he had been nominated to membership. In acknowledging it he wrote: "Now that I see the names of the six 'wilful' Academicians who signed the document, I understand for the first time how this thing was 'put over' on the Academy! It was something like selecting an Ohio Senator for President, wasn't it? In both cases, at any rate, the choice was extraordinarily gratifying to the village." He also asked for the correction of a mistake: "The notice still leaves me at Northwestern University, where I taught only one year. My special 'pride' is my connection ever since with the state—with the University of Illinois."[6]

One honor begets another. It was perhaps his election to the Academy that suggested to the authorities at Yale that Sherman would be a suitable man to add to their faculty. Late in March he received a very cordially worded invitation from the Department of English, being told that it was the first time in the history of the department that any appointment to a full professorship had been contemplated save by promotion from within. Though fully sensible of the honor, Sherman carefully described to President Angell the advantages which he enjoyed at Illinois as well as the drawbacks of his position.

[6]April 30, 1923.

(*To President Angell*)

April 3, 1923.

DEAR PRESIDENT ANGELL:

Your interesting telegram took me quite unprepared, as it was the first occasion on which the possibility of my going to Yale had ever been presented to my mind. Though I have visited the university and know how attractive to the eye it and the country around New Haven are, I have heard little or no discussion of the agreeableness of life and the status of the teacher in its Department of English.

In many respects I am very satisfactorily situated here. The university has always treated me well. For many years I have been charged with the responsibility of a large department; but my teaching load has always been reasonable. I received promotion to a professorship very early and was rapidly advanced to the maximum professorial salary. This is, I suppose, exceeded at four or five other institutions; but when the cost of living, etc., are taken into consideration, the difference in that respect is not so wide as it may at first appear. Finally I am interested in the state institution, and, unlike some men educated in our Easterly institutions of another character, I find the entire aspect and air of our Middle-Western enterprise rather exhilarating.

On the other hand, as I advance into the sobering forties, I find myself more and more anxious to get on with the special work for which, in order to spur myself along, I say to myself that I came into the world. This, I conceive it, is to study and think out a number of things and to write about them. And when I ask myself what position could be more attractive than the one which I now hold, I find the main answer is, one where there is more time and more stimulus and more fellowship in studying, thinking, and writing. I like teaching, and feel that as a part of my "call," and am not distracted by it. But to write as much as I do, and to teach as much as I do, and also to manage a department, attend committees, etc., is wearing; and the third element is distracting.

I had rather expected that your letter would sketch out a little the possibilities and attractions of the Yale position;

but I find that it contains only the contents of the telegram. It strikes me, however, that it might be an economy of time for us both and of expense for you if we had a discussable proposal before us before deciding to go into conference. I know, as I have said, something of the visible charms of New Haven for people with only half-converted New England hearts. I have met several of the English faculty, have corresponded with others, and know how agreeable official relations might be, if they desired to have me join them. But I don't know what sort of work I should be expected to take up, or how much, or at what salary; and in the position which I now hold I cannot *take it for granted* (I am answering the question of your telegram) that a conference would be "profitable."

To this letter President Angell replied: "The Yale traditions have long been sympathetic to the development of humane letters and we are very eager that this atmosphere shall be preserved and enriched as opportunity offers. . . . Our minds have turned toward you less because we desire a specific piece of instruction or a specific type of investigation pursued under our roof than because we wish to add to our fellowship your peculiar intellectual and spiritual equipment and your outlook upon life and literature."[7] Sherman went to New Haven for a conference and was very hospitably entertained, but the persuasion consisted mainly in impressing upon him the privilege of being admitted to the elect society of Yale and the opportunity of transferring his influence to new surroundings. The form which these advantages were to take was never very concretely put before him and the mere external glamour of the place was not likely to allure him. As far as salary was concerned the University of Illinois would not let itself be outdone, and President Kinley, himself an alumnus of Yale, was ready to promise Sherman anything except location east of the Allegheny Mountains. Perhaps Sherman himself went back to the notebook in which, only a year or so earlier, he had set down the arguments in favor of the State University, and found there the conclusive reasons for rejecting the offer of Yale. His decision to stay in Urbana was received with great relief by the home community. The refusal to accept a call from one of

[7]April 6, 1923.

the leading universities of the East was felt to be a practically final commitment to the University of Illinois. Sherman's real attitude, however, is explained in a letter to a former student:

"Contrary to my desire and intention they made quite a little ado here about a visit in the East which I made to talk over the possibility of a change. I let that possibility go by, and have no expectation of changing my base at present. I've not made a vow to be buried here, to be sure; but I am content to continue a while the experiment of 'accepting the universe' in Urbana. Did you ever stop to consider that the universe is just about the same thing whether you accept it in Joliet or in Urbana?"[8]

Having passed through the excitement incident to the crowning by the Academy and the offer from Yale, and having, moreover, consummated a phase of his literary work with the publication of *Americans* and *The Genius of America*, Sherman was now meditating new themes and considering the form of his next appearance before the public. He gave an account of some of his teeming plans in a letter to Mr. Maxwell Perkins.

(*To M. E. Perkins*)

April 27, 1923.

In one form or another I shall have appeared in connection with four books within the twelve-month. I don't want to be thought a rabbit: *Americans; Genius of America; Brownell's American Prose Masters* as editor; and editor of Joaquin Miller's *Poems*.

(1) Will Howe has let me in or got me in for a job writing a text for Spicer-Simson's *Medallions*—which is to be more or less privately printed. That should be completed before the summer is over. I have thought of the possibility of making out of that a fairly stout book on contemporary English men of letters.

(2) I have material enough to put together a somewhat miscellaneous collection of essays, with a good proportion of American material. To this I wish to add, when I can get around to it, a study and appreciation of Santayana, much of whose

[8]To A. Francis Trams, May 15, 1923.

work I greatly admire, including some of the poems.—This volume I think should have a rather distinctly literary and æsthetic flavor, as distinguished from the moral, political, and social notes of the other two.

(3) I am incubating a book on religion!—which I conceive of privately as a kind of new *Religio Medici*—or *Religio Laici*. There are filaments of the idea in *The Genius of America*, and I believe there is considerable novelty in the approach. My secret meditations on it have been anticipated, I might add, by M. A. DeWolfe Howe, who during the year has written to me several times about doing such a book for the Atlantic Monthly Press. I have not at all committed myself—both because I am a little afraid of the project (though more or less in love with it); and also because I am so much pleased with my treatment from the Scribners that I don't wish to undertake anything of any interest to them without consulting them.

(4) I have also under occasional consideration a rather interesting historical and critical book on "American Style," which you might think of as more or less parallel to Bro. Mencken on the American Language.

All these things are fairly definitely conceived and could be got under way without much delay. In the background there are other shapes hovering of a country book which you might conceive of as *The Family Walden* as distinguished from the hermit Walden of Thoreau. This would reek of poetry, philosophy, and the woods and waters of Michigan; then there is another vague shape called *The Teacher*—or some such idiotic title—a modernized study of an ideal, which should be done in a somewhat Platonic fashion.

But here is a good deal more than enough about dreams and projects. A year from now I expect a sabbatical leave; and hope to do something substantial in it. Meanwhile, I shall be glad to have any comments or suggestions as to a wise use of "odd moments."

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Not mentioned in this list is an important essay, which had occupied him for some months, on the question of literary

censorship. He had promised early in the winter to treat it for the *Atlantic Monthly*, but it was not till March 2nd that he outlined his ideas on the subject in a letter to Mr. Charles R. Walker, Mr. Sedgwick's assistant, as follows: "that in theory a censorship of some sort is quite justifiable; that in practice it is dangerous and almost unworkable; that the only efficient *control* lies in the hands of the publishers; that the authors ought to reform themselves and anticipate the prevention of the police." The first two ideas he developed in the article itself with irrefutable sense and cogency, reversing their order in presentation. He pleased the foes of censorship by pointing out that it was hopeless to make a morally safe world—safe, that is, for children and adolescents—by wiping out all the germs of moral infection. Since it could not be done, the hope of doing it was not beautiful and inspiring, but fantastic and dangerous. The reason why it could not be done was that there was no definite, objective test for indecent literature such as had been established by law for intoxicating liquor. The juryman who was called upon to determine the quality of a disreputable book was really instructed "to conjecture whether a book is indecent by first conjecturing how it will affect young minds which are, conjecturally, open to the conjecturable influence of such a book." But having demonstrated the impossibility of legislating on literary morals, Sherman then proceeded to censure the authors who ignored or made light of the problem with which the censorship attempted to cope. On the basis of his general conception of literature he could not for a moment sanction the assumption that the moral effect of works of art was unimportant, or that, indeed, it was possible to separate the æsthetic from the moral consciousness. In "Literature and the Government of Men" he had just finished making out his case for books as an influence in molding the behavior of men in society, and he now reiterated his belief in their power to modify the controllable part of the human environment in the interest of public welfare, calling this one of the noblest enterprises of statecraft. He arrived at a solution which could, he realized, give satisfaction to no one. The only remedy, it seemed to him, lay in responsible authorship, and the only proper instrument for modifying the character and temper of our literature was in an "independent and dispassionate criticism."

This even-handed article, appearing in the July number of the *Atlantic Monthly* under the title "Unprintable," was very widely quoted and commented on in the newspapers. The character of its reception, both by Mr. Sumner and the opposition, was approximately what Sherman had foreseen and pointedly summed up in a letter to Mr. Sedgwick.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

Dunewood, Manistee, Michigan,
July 21, 1923.

DEAR MR. SEDGWICK:

I am returning herewith Mr. Sumner's letter on "Unprintable." No: I didn't expect he would plump the vote of the Anti-Vice Society for me. But, on the other hand, I didn't expect a vast deal of applause from the Society of Authors either. And I haven't received it. They are, I suspect, thinking it over. That is what at any rate I hoped they would do. The half dozen letters that have come in are, rather curiously, from Mr. Sumner's "party"—that is, from people who think that I spoke on the side of "decency."—Well, I hope that I did.

The "weak" ending was of course bound to impress the Gawdsakers as futile. I hope that it will send some readers back to the middle. At present no one seems to care for argument or evidence: they wish only to hear that someone has been acquitted—or better far, hanged.

I think Mr. Sumner's remark that I have made "merely something readable" out of an article on unprintable books which does not contain the name of a single unprintable book, is a very fine compliment. Few of his "party" could have treated the subject without giving the "young" a complete guide to unprintable literature.

Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

At the close of the college year Sherman sent the following letter to his mother.

(*To Mrs. Ada P. Sherman*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
June 1, 1923.

DEAR MOTHER:

It is interesting to hear of your new house and the pleasure you take in devising it. I hope you are going to enjoy it. It must have a beautiful view of the meadow rolling to the brook and the Prentiss woods and the wonderful valley vista to the northward. But don't wear yourself out with "toting" and man's work in the elements of building. Save yourself for the decoration of the edifice—for the encrustation of its inner walls with pearl, which is the feminine part of the work!—I'm afraid this is a pretty poor joke in Dorset, as *elsewhere*.

We are just winding up the year here. Last night we went to the High School to see John graduate. He was youngest in a class of, I think, about 150, though by no means the smallest. He has made a very respectable record as a scholar, though not so good as he might have made if he had cared more for Latin and hard work! He is going to be a few weeks under the legal age for admission to the University; but has petitioned for special dispensation.

Ruth's irises are in glorious bloom in the garden, under a warm and wet week, and I suppose Kitty's are likewise in her garden, though you probably haven't had any of our dank-hot Mississippi valley days yet. I wonder whether Ruth has written that we bought not very long ago an old Ford, in which we are planning to drive up to Michigan, if Providence doesn't too much object. It is about 500 miles. If I had to be the conductor, I should hesitate. But John seems to be a pretty good driver with far more interest in machinery than I ever had, and we are rather trusting to him to pull us through.

You might tell Kitty that for one of my summer jobs, I am to write a descriptive text for twenty-five or so medallions of English men-of-letters executed by Theodore Spicer-Simson, an English sculptor now in New York, with whom I am enjoying an interesting correspondence. Also that I have just been

nominated for membership in the Authors Club of New York. Tell her that it isn't at all necessary to *live* in New York in order to get all of this sort of stuff you want. Urbana is just as good. *Dorset is much better.*

With much love to you and all,
Affectionately,
STUART.

The literary "job" alluded to in the last paragraph had been occupying Sherman's attention for some time. Mr. Spicer-Simson had arranged for a book of beautiful design by Bruce Rogers on handmade paper and hand printed, and in looking about for a person to write the text had been put in touch with Sherman by Mr. W. D. Howe of Scribner's. Sherman was much struck with the idea, especially after seeing photographs of some of the medallions and reading Mr. Spicer-Simson's explanation of his art in a letter transmitted to him by Mr. Howe:

"To my mind the highest forms of art are centripetal, so to say. Directness of expression combined with sensitiveness of perception concentrated in some chosen limited frame gives the maximum of æsthetic enjoyment. It seems to me therefore a short description of a man's work may be simply documental or profoundly illuminating according to the knowledge and temperament of the writer. Both are of interest but the latter type very rare. I was anxious to have Professor Sherman because he combines these two qualities. In my own work I have attempted by the space divisions and the arrangement of the inscriptions, as well as the features of my sitter, to show not only his psychology but also how his character governs his work.

"For example, G. B. S.'s writing seems to me to be preponderatingly intellectual: in my portrait we see him firmly planted in the center, straight up and down, while the lettering is like scales on each side and the space around his head absolutely free. With Arnold Bennett, the body is not brought to the edge of the medallion; therefore, although the lettering is somewhat like Shaw's, it gives an impression of instability. For Conrad's likeness we see a man gazing intently outside the frame, nothing hindering his far-seeing imaginative eyes, yet the lettering above his head by its close proximity presses upon

this freedom of outlook just as Fate seems to always play some mean and rather unusual trick upon his heroes!"[9]

For the text the artist did not desire an interpretation of his portraits but an independent critical estimate of the men of letters represented. For a man of Sherman's method of working it was rather a terrific thing to undertake to produce in a relatively short time some twenty-five or thirty considered judgments on writers, most of them voluminous and some never previously in the sphere of his interest. But it was a challenge to his powers and a chance to satisfy an impulse toward poetic appreciation which had an insufficient outlet in his other work. After the agreement was made Mr. Spicer-Simson requested a specimen sketch for use in advertising. Sherman's reply indicates the pressure under which he had to compose it and his attitude toward this job in general.

(*To T. Spicer-Simson*)

May 3, 1923.

Dear Mr. Spicer-Simson:

A hard-pressed man can at a pinch always do one thing more; accordingly I will try to send you a sketch of T. Hardy by May 10th. As an artist with his own time at his own command I suppose you have little notion how one thing after another in term-time knock a "damned professor's" time and plans into a cocked hat, and make him appear a model of procrastination when he is really only a camel groaning under the next to the last straw.

I have put four books and seven or eight articles through the press this year; looked after a department of 6,000 students in English; and done the regular amount of teaching. The publications were all in hand when we began to correspond and had to be attended to first. Unforeseen departmental pressures ate up the expected breathing place in the spring in which I wished to do quite a lot of reading on Medallions.

Consequently I haven't been able to study Hudson or Conrad as I wish to do before writing on them. One wants to have *all*, and not some of their work freshly in hand, even for a sketch. I therefore revert to Hardy as the best one to treat now.

[9]Letter from T. Spicer-Simson to W. D. Howe, January 6, 1923.

In the middle of June I take my books into the woods and work without interruption for nearly three months; and I have everything cleared out of the way of this enterprise. But till June life is the proverbial one damn thing after another.

I'll send the Conrad Medallion back to-day. It has been a fine thing to look at. I have a Whitman Medallion done for the Whitman Club a few years ago. Beside the fine lines of portraiture in your work, the Whitman looks like the rough scratchings of a Cave Man, and yet I liked it pretty well before I placed the other beside it.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Mr. Spicer-Simson was enthusiastic over the first specimen of Sherman's appreciation. He sent it to his friend, Mr. George F. Hill, of the British Museum, who was equally impressed and wrote back: "Sherman's piece is as clever as they make them, and very penetrating as well. He will perhaps, as you say, have difficulty in keeping it up; and I am not sure that it is desirable to do it all on one plane. The appetite soon gets cloyed; and something in a different style ought to be brought in every now and then—like a *sorbet*. I admit it is difficult, if you have to sum up a man in a page, to avoid being either too epigrammatic or dully descriptive. And anyhow, it's not the sort of book people will read on end, so much as pick up at odd times." There was variety enough in the subjects to permit the variety of treatment which Mr. Hill thought desirable. There were among them writers who left Sherman cold and some who were even distasteful. But he was not committed to sustain the note of praise. Discrimination is as conspicuous a feature of these portraits as of all his critical work. Indeed it had to be, for he had no choice in the subjects. He did try to detach himself from certain prejudices, and the measure of his impartiality is given in the regret he expressed when it was necessary, because of the impracticability of getting a sitting, to omit D. H. Lawrence, who was on the original list. "I don't rise to the heights of wonder about Lawrence that most of his contemporaries reach," he wrote to Mr. Spicer-Simson; "but his English brethren generally proclaim themselves unworthy to unloose

the latchet of his shoes. Wouldn't the omission be thought singular? His recent observations on Hawthorne in the *Dial* seem to me, to be sure, to descend into the depths of infamy so far as style and tone are concerned. But so far as his observations on me are concerned,[10] they affect me as merely amusing, and I shouldn't wish anyone to think that his omission was intended as punishment."[11]

But if Lawrence was omitted, James Joyce remained to give trouble. After reading *Ulysses* Sherman confessed he was baffled to conceive why anyone should wish to father such a *monstrum*, but, he added, "I shall try to understand before I write." About Joyce Mr. Spicer-Simson supplied Sherman with a clue derived from personal observation. He thought he "looked upon human beings with the impersonal and unsympathetic eye of an intelligent insect, which gives him the power to describe our lowest instincts photographically, and as if they had no relation to him."[12] There was the friendliest coöperation between the medallist and the writer. Suggestions from the former, always modestly proffered, were received with the friendliest attention because Sherman respected the taste which dictated them. There was apparently a little difference of opinion as to Mr. Robert Bridges. "You seem to hint," wrote Sherman, "that my appreciation in this case is a little cool. Perhaps it is. I think the problems of sculptor and writer are rather different with a man like Bridges.—Obviously he has a very fine head, well marked with lines of thought and experience. Everyone to whom I have shown the photographs has commented upon the interest of that medallion.—But I couldn't find that man in the poems, and I had to say so."[13] When Mr. Spicer-Simson raised a question as to whether enough had been said about Hardy as a poet, Sherman replied:

"You need not hesitate in the least when you think of a slip that should be amended or a stroke that is lacking. I am myself afraid that Hardy is mistaken about the permanent basis of his immortality! But I have always thought him an interesting poet. And his poetry is so thoroughly characteris-

[10]In a review of *Americans* in the *Dial*, April, 1923.

[11]May 17, 1923.

[12]May 10, 1923.

[13]August 28, 1923.

tic that I re-read three volumes of it to refresh my sense of him immediately before I wrote that sketch. But I have had both his poetry and all his novels in mind these last twenty years; and it was only the accident of the scheme of that particular sketch that the poetry escaped explicit mention."[14] A week later he added:

"I have inserted here an emphatic assertion that T. Hardy is a *poet!* Without using the word, the rest of the sketch says the same thing, I see on reconsideration. And almost everything in the sketch applies to his verse just as it applies to his prose. So that I don't see how anyone can fairly complain that the verse has been neglected."[15]

Mr. Spicer-Simson followed all the details of the phrasing with a sympathetic but vigilant eye. In one case at least it led to a very happy result. The original sketch of Hardy concluded with a picture of "the curious nonchalance of Saxon churls watching the withdrawal of the Roman legions." When the significance of this phrase was pointed out to him Sherman sent back a correction in agonized haste:

"Yes, for heaven's sake, strike out those 'Saxon churls'! I am not in the slightest doubt about them! and never have been, nor can I explain how they got in. It wasn't even a 'lapse of memory,' for I have all those transactions in daily remembrance. It was a sheer idiocy of the pen, and, if it had not been caught, it would have been an awful 'howler.'

"Please write: 'which they view with the curious nonchalance of British aborigines watching the withdrawal of the Roman legions.'"[16] But this change only convinced Mr. Spicer-Simson that Sherman's pen had, in the first instance, written "better than it knew." "Saxon churls" was clearly nearer to the feeling of Hardy's Wessex than "British aborigines." "Cannot those stupid 'Saxon churls' remain," he pleaded, "by moving the scenery along a few centuries?" It required a few trials before the appropriate dramatic image was supplied and we were given "the curious nonchalance of Saxon churls watching the burial of the arrow-stricken body of William Rufus."

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[14]August 29, 1923.

[15]September 5, 1923.

[16]May 17, 1923.

This was the task which Sherman carried up with him to Dunewood that summer and on which he toiled with all his power of concentration. The "small job" called for a very serious amount of labor. "My summer 'hornets,'" he said in a letter to Lew Sarett, "were mainly 29 articles which exhausted the ink in my well this summer, and left me only strength to tumble into the lake or into a canoe at the end of the day."[17] Thus one faithfully describes one's activity to a friend; to one's mother, it is necessary to give a different impression. To her he wrote: "I work no more than is good for me. The setting is so cool and pleasant and the work also is so pleasant that one likes them both almost equally. If I had nothing to do but to work at writing, I think I should ask nothing better. It is only the University job with its human responsibilities that gets on my nerves; and that I manage to shake off by neglecting it most of the time in the summer."[18]

As his work was drawing toward completion, and it seemed good in his eyes, he began to feel a pang at the prospect of its limited circulation. "I admit," he wrote to Mr. Perkins, "that I like pretty well what I have written about a good many figures in the gallery. But I am enthusiastic about the merit of Spicer-Simson's portraits. The extraordinary expressiveness of them has grown upon me as I have worked with them before me."[19] Mr. Spicer-Simson expressed his pleasure at the result without reservation: "I cannot tell you how delighted I am with the monographs; they possess a variety which seemed almost impossible of attainment and a beauty and truth of presentation in their pictures which are very striking."[20] To Mr. William Chauncey Langdon he wrote in terms of even stronger appreciation:

"Stuart P. Sherman has finished his task, all 29 monographs are written and all but one or two sent to the publisher. I think he has surpassed himself, that some of these short essays will be taken in years to come as examples of the best type of descriptive writing of our time—great pictures in words (which

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[17]October 12, 1923.
[18]August 4, 1923.
[19]August 7, 1923.
[20]August, 1923.

at the same moment convey information concerning the work and the author depicted) that are actually a new and original form of literary criticism which will certainly be copied. The monographs on Ch. M. Doughty and Arnold Bennett are masterpieces of the highest kind and utterly different, as the men are. It is more than probable that the book will be sold out under 12 months."[21]

Enthusiastic as this appreciation is, it scarcely overrates the qualities of the book. The essays specially praised in it are surpassed by those on Conrad, Hardy, and Galsworthy. In the last Sherman was permitted to spread himself at double length and found room for some very vital criticism. The impressions of the poets—Dunsany, W. H. Davies, De la Mare, Ralph Hodgson, Masefield, James Stephens—are rendered with a fineness of feeling which makes poems of the interpretations. The imaginative phrasing, the incisive significance of each stroke, and the just proportioning of each literary character bring the text into perfect harmony with the accompanying portraits. There are sentences in which compression and illumination are combined as in this: "Two contrasting elements conspire in the work of Conrad for its peculiar distinction and significance: a temperament which responds powerfully to the seduction of the elemental and a character which resists seduction." And there are sentences laden with poetry and music like this: "Memoried time, pregnant with dooms, broods like a purple haze over the fair southern English countryside with its sheep-cotes and granges, its clustering hamlets, cathedral towns, harvest fields, rich vales, slow rivers, woods, hills, barren heath, and wave-beaten headlands with the sea-mews wheeling in the briny Atlantic air."

The book was too costly to distribute to reviewers. The London *Times* "Literary Supplement" noticed it as "touched with a rich fancy, sometimes perhaps a little too dazzlingly 'clever,' but almost always interesting though not sure in their criticism." The last stricture was by way of suggesting the reviewer's dissent from Sherman's judgment of Mr. Robert Bridges and Charles Doughty.[22] The comment of Charles

[21]August 24, 1923.

[22]November 20, 1924.

Doughty himself, when he received a proof-sheet of his own sketch was: "I recognize at once that it is from a powerful pen, showing a surprising grasp with knowledge and sympathy; if, which I must say it is, overdrawn; but for this," he added, "I am not responsible."[23] There were other readers who thought the book was an astonishing feat. To one admirer of his work he replied: "Your appreciation is very pleasant. It makes one feel that one has done something for the 'Glory of God.' And I am glad that you didn't dislike the Conrad, for I felt that piece and the truth of it strongly last summer when I immersed myself in C's books and tried to fill myself with his spirit. There is something great in the man—high and heroic in the face of the fathomless beauty and horror of the universe."[24] The book needs only to be made more accessible to be sure of wider recognition.

The correspondence of the two collaborators was maintained after the completion of their work. Mr. Spicer-Simson sent Sherman a copy of his monograph on *Portrait Reliefs, Medals and Coins* and received the following cordial acknowledgment.

(*To T. Spicer-Simson*)

Oct. 30, 1923.

Dear Mr. Spicer-Simson:

I thank you for the *Portrait Reliefs, Medals and Coins in Their Relation to Life and Art.* It is a satisfaction to have an autographed work of yours on my shelves; and this one has much instructed the reader in the delights and difficulties of the art. Particularly I have been impressed by what you say of the purely artistic, as distinguished from the natural basis of "scale" in the execution of works reduced far below the life size. Also I find very suggestive your observations on the relation between the flourishing of the medallist's art and a high degree of artistic sophistication in the community. It means high selection, doesn't it? and ability on the part of the artist to take a great deal for granted—to assume a quantity of

[23]Quoted by T. Spicer-Simson in letter to Sherman, December 5, 1923.

[24]Letter to D. Longwell, April 22, 1924.

background in the culture of the public—a background which a slight symbolic hint is capable of calling actively into coöperation with economical strokes of the artist—for imaginative effect. . . .

Are you doing our New York *literati* now? As soon as they see the British album, they will surely be clamoring to you to send them likewise into immortality!

During the summer of 1923 Sherman was applied to by Mr. V. V. McNitt for advice and support in the launching of a new magazine of liberal tendencies that should aim at a rather wide public. His reply was sympathetic and even cordial. It gave him a chance to indicate some of the interests that were close to his heart and to show that he had ideas for the editing of a journal that combined popular appeal with qualities of literary permanence. Though he could not assume the responsibilities of an advisory editor, he promised to make occasional contributions, a promise which he bettered in the performance after *McNaught's Monthly* began publication.

(*To V. V. McNitt*)

Dunewood, Manistee,
Michigan,
June 28, 1923.

My dear Mr. McNitt:

I have read your letter and the prospectus with interest and curiosity.

I am interested in the temper and general principles of the magazine, particularly in the temper, which is a very important element in the prosperity of these enterprises.

My curiosity relates to those who are going into it as contributors—not as occasional contributors but as the group who from month to month will give it character and tone. Unless you have such a group, as you show yourselves aware, it will be difficult to make the thing carry out the promise of your liberal prospectus and, in spite of its liberality, stand positively for something.

I am no expert or prophet in these matters, and I comment

on distinct phases of the proposals only because I have been asked to do so—not with the idea that I shall say anything very wise about them.

The thing looks and sounds—in the name—rather too much like too many little-magazines. I suppose that sufficiently brilliant writers and business managers might float any sort of name and any sort of format. But great numbers of groups without much brilliance have been trying lately to float little-magazines which, to the eye, looked very much like this. If, unwarned, I saw this on a book stand, I should be inclined to say: "O there's another of them." (I believe three quite new ones came to me from Chicago last summer, and two or three others from the Mississippi Valley.) I feel therefore like urging the proposers to serious consideration of this point.

The proposed composition of the journal strikes me as perhaps a little too close to the weekly organ of opinion—that is, a little too political and a little too close to the news. A monthly ought to have a certain element of permanence in it—permanence enough, at any rate, to last through the month! If you go in very heavily for Mr. Harding and the prize-fighters, the interest will not more than last through the week, unless your contributors write like seraphs.—If I were to suggest at this point, I should say steer away from politics and towards society—I mean human not fashionable society.

I wonder who the subscribers are to be. What is the audience? Are not the big selling (1,000,000) magazines those which are aimed at the hearth-and-home, particularly in the provinces? It would add a big feather to your wing if you promised a constructive treatment of provincial life as a neglected aspect of human society—not a treatment of it for the city man who builds a fine country house but a treatment of it for the man who lives in the small town and village all the year around. That is a field for imagination and enthusiasm; and I don't know who is working it with any notable distinction in this country.

Finally, as to my own assistance: I am a rather poor reed to lean on. I am a busy teacher most of the year, and can't throw myself into an undertaking of this sort as those who make it go must. I find time for an article such as you might use only once or twice a year, and am not now suffering for lack of a place of

publication. Naturally, when one is an infrequent writer one wishes to choose, other things being equal, the best audience obtainable. I shall cast a friendly eye in your direction. Though I am afraid that I can't be counted on much as a contributor I am perfectly willing to be applied to. If the thing goes, you will probably produce a group of younger writers who will kill off the rest of us.

With best wishes,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Sherman was not only making new friends of the sort that pleased him, he was also experiencing increasing evidence of good will from his former opponents. Mr. Spingarn had buried the hatchet and had for some time been praising Sherman's later writings as having a vigor and maturity that he did not find in the earlier. In the summer of 1923 he sent Sherman his privately printed monograph on Troutbeck and tried to persuade him to write an essay on Mr. Woodberry. The following letters were the replies.

(*To J. E. Spingarn*)

Dunewood, Manistee,
Michigan,
June 18, 1923.

DEAR MR. SPINGARN:

I thank you for the interesting monograph on Troutbeck. It must be very delightful to acquire so much history and spiritual property along with such charming woods and streams. While waiting for my boxes of books to arrive here in the wilderness, I have just read through an odd volume of Addison's *Spectator*, which has had no company this last winter but the squirrels; and now by a kind of crossing of the wires I am able to think of you as a stout Tory squire riding on errands of benevolence among your contented tenantry—and excogitating an æsthetic theory in vital correspondence with the setting!

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

Dunewood, Manistee,
Michigan,
July 1, 1923.

DEAR MR. SPINGARN:

My banter seems to get off on the wrong foot every time. I won't defend "squire" and "Tory," if you object to them. But even here in the woods I have a dictionary, which gives me as the first sense of the word: "brave, bold"! As for that later physical sense of rotundity I know you to be no more fat than bard beseems,—nay, rather svelte and sylph-like, since you were identified for me at an adjacent table of the Poetry Society dinner in N. Y. in 1917. Unless you have increased equatorial dimensions notably since then, as we middle-aged respectable burgesses are prone to do, you are quite cleared of the unintended aspersion. All the same, I will welcome the photograph and the formal recordable protest.

As to Woodberry, I sympathize with your desire, and in certain circumstances might be tempted to undertake some sort of tribute and commemoration. It is a sort of thing that I take pleasure in doing; and I can quite understand the prodding of conscience that a disciple of his would feel in an article like Macy's, which, as you say, was painful with half-truths. At the present I am restrained from rising to your lure by three considerations. First, I am engaged on a task which keeps me at my table daily, and will hold me there for the next 40 days. Second, the question rises, who would publish a good round article on Woodberry in these days, and where could it be published except in a book? Third, this is the weightiest: I have never myself sat at the feet of Woodberry nor have I ever been under his spell. He gave us a week's lectures some years ago at the university and I marked the way the young fellows hung on his presence. I read *The Heart of Man* and one or two others of his prose books when I was in high school, and I have dipped into his poetry since—into *The Roamer* rather sadly, into the sonnets with a sense of *antiquæ flammæ*. But my real feeling for his personality all comes to me second hand from the tales of Columbia men to whom he was obviously so very much more

of a spirit and a kindling torch than one can divine from his books.—Isn't the commendable thing, in a way, what he did to youths of the older generation, what is preserved in the oral tradition, what a man like Dean Briggs remembers of his bright youth in the classroom, a fire and radiance that cool somehow and lose their quickening immediacy on the printed page.—And if so, should not the paper be written by you yourself, or by Erskine perhaps, or by someone who possesses a big batch of letters and personal knowledge, and can work in a lot of fresh detail and intimate interpretation. I understand his type well enough to "divine" him quite clearly through his works. But I don't possess a scrap of anecdote, or fact of any sort to freshen up the divination.

Before long I expect to put together another volume of Americans, and I may try to write a few pages on him and put him into my "academic" group—along with Brownell, and Santayana, and Matthews!—two of whom I have done. But to return to my question, why don't you loosen your sword in his scabbard, and do some of these things yourself?—some of the memorials of your own time—men and things with which you have had immediate contact? It strikes me as the most, or almost the most, delectable kind of writing. We have little of it of the right sort; and the academic field, which is not half so sterile as it is thought, is almost *unscratched.*

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Even the Chicago coterie was changing its tone toward Sherman. Persons who had had a glimpse of the monster in his own lair had gone back and told their friends that he was not nearly as horrible as their imagination had painted him. Carl Sandburg spent a night under Sherman's roof and gave an account of it to Mr. Harry Hansen, and the latter communicated his surprise to the readers of the *Daily News*, incidentally letting the cat out of the bag as to the basis of his previous impression: "Our preconceived ideas of Sherman, which," he confessed, "we got from reading Mencken, have been sternly corrected of late. We learn that he is not venerable at all, but young, alert, enthusiastic, and good looking. This deepens the mystery of why he allowed himself to be embalmed in the American

Academy of Arts and Letters. Carl said of Illinois: 'You get a feeling of health down there.'"[25] Visitors from Urbana to Chicago came back with reports of the growing admiration for the brilliancy of his writing privately expressed by its literary leaders. One of his fiercest assailants of former days began to shower him with letters of profusest compliment. The president of the Society of Midland Authors invited him to give an address in the fall of 1922, calling upon him as "the sanest and certainly the most entertaining critic in the United States." This invitation, like one or two he had received from other groups in Chicago, was not accepted by Sherman, but when it was repeated in 1923 in connection with a testimonial dinner to Herbert Quick, he decided to go up and disburden himself of a message that had long been on his mind.

Sherman was sometimes accused, in these later years, of "hugging in the clinches." That phrase could scarcely be applied, however, to the remarks which he addressed to the Society of Midland Authors on the evening of October 23d. There was little that he left unsaid as to the pretensions of Chicago to be a literary center or as to the manners of its critics. The stinging force of his blows was mitigated only by the frankness and humor with which they were delivered. After alluding to his residence "within a stone's throw of Chicago," saying he was certain of the distance because he had heard the stones rattling against his windows, and after commenting on the fitness of the slaughter house as the central symbol of the spiritual activities of Chicago and of Mr. Sandburg's figure of "a hunky sweeping blood from the floor of the shambles at $1.50 a day" as representing its literary criticism, he congratulated Mr. Quick on having achieved the difficult triumph of a favorable verdict from "the bloody assizes." He spoke with directness and candor of the amateurish character of the literature produced in Chicago—of its newspapers which print more advertising and less literary information than those of any other city of its size in the world, of its magazines printing without remuneration the contributions of their own subscribers, of its book reviewing done gratis by young boys and girls who are learning to write, of its novelists and poets and

[25]May 2, 1923.

critics who, as soon as they learn to write grammatically, migrate to New York. "A great city," he told them, "which tries to maintain literature and arts on an amateur basis must expect that, when its authors and artists complete their apprenticeship, they will move to a city where literature is maintained on a professional basis, and they can get bread for their labor. That New York maintains literature on a professional basis and Chicago on an amateur basis is, I suppose, the fundamental economic difference between the two cities as literary centers."

After this he passed into a more ironic key with reference to a "floating rumor" about Chicago authors being "an organization of industrious log-rollers, adoring one another, and puffing all Mid-Western writers." It was for the express purpose and pleasure of refuting that calumny, he said, that he had accepted an invitation to speak to them that night. Then he launched with malicious glee into the refutation:

"Literary criticism in Chicago has its faults and peculiarities, Heaven knows; but indiscriminate welcome and adulation is not one of them. It loves truth dearer than a brother. And if it doesn't like a book, it says so in unmistakable terms, no matter how perfectly Mid-Western its author may be.

"I don't know how I can illustrate the point more promptly than by a specific instance. Six years ago an Iowa author residing in Illinois at about a stone's throw from Chicago, published a volume of criticism. Now criticism, as everyone knows, is of all forms of literature the most obnoxious and unpalatable; yet this book, as such books go, did receive in general a fairly wide and friendly welcome.

"The Chicago critics, with the zest for new things which characterizes them, at once showered upon book and author distinguishing marks of their interest. One critic spoke of the author as 'a middle-aged pedagogue who writes as if he were seventy years old.' A second described him as a person with 'a fresh youthful treble—an exquisite, pink-cheeked acolyte, with a Brahmin yawp.' A third characterized the book as a misbegotten child, 'wizened,' 'inarticulate,' 'a stutterer,' 'a belligerent blockhead'; and characterized the author as a 'superior person attempting to curry favor with Back Bay,' a 'conceited prig,' a 'plagiarist,' 'one with the unctuous Southey

and the clownish Lockhart,' and concluded with the suggestion that the children of his brain should be 'sterilized so that they would do no further harm.' A fourth critic, all through the spring of that year, whenever he had occasion to praise a new book—a life of Keats or a history of the novel—would point up his praise by remarking: 'It is a good book. It is not written as the Iowa author whom we reviewed last January would have written it.' A fifth critic, having occasion to commend Boni and Liveright's Modern Library, said: 'It is a good library. We note with pleasure that no person of the character of the Iowa author whom we reviewed last January has been asked to contribute to this Library.' Finally, in March, a sixth critic published an extract from a private letter of George Moore's, in which George Moore said: This book 'will always be remembered by me as the most detestably written book, from my point of view, that has ever appeared in print. The author brays like a wild ass.'

"Having given your Iowa colleague this rousing send-off, the Chicago critics rested their case. So far as I have observed, no book of his has ever been reviewed in the Chicago press since that time.

"If I myself had been slated and damned and blacklisted in this fashion in Chicago, I should never have imputed it to the malice but to the incorruptibility of Chicago critics, an incorruptibility rendered slightly acrimonious by the stepmotherly treatment which the city accords literature. No man can value properly the praise of us Middle Westerners who doesn't understand how hard we hate what we dispraise."

The last sentence led to the statement of the serious theme, to the criticism of the spirit in which the novelists of Chicago treated their environment. He complimented the group on the great service it had performed in breaking through the superficial protective respectability of the average American of our generation and exhibiting the chaos of his miscellaneous hungers and discontents. "But," he added, coming to the point of his address, "it is a service which has often been performed in a spirit of hatred and violence and journalistic sensationalism. Chicago tends to encourage journalistic effort by recognizing and rewarding nothing else. Chicago authors apparently feel obliged to yell in order to make themselves heard above the

street-cars and the newspapers. Now, a yell is often a necessary act. It is often an appropriate act. But a yell lacks one of the fine qualities of literature: it lacks charm. It seems to originate in fear and hatred, and it tends to provoke hatred and fear—unless it is promptly followed and offset by notes of reassurance. Mid-Western satire has not merely stripped the average man naked but has skinned him alive; he will remain a pitiful and abhorrent object till he gets a new skin; and the Chicago novelists generally haven't the faintest idea where a new skin is to be had."

The illustration of his point he drew from the honored guest of the evening, showing that he could be as gracious in appreciation as he was sharp in rebuke:

"While reading Mr. Hecht's *Gargoyles* makes a loyal Illinoisian feel that he would like to pack his bag and belongings and spend his declining years in San Diego or Rome, reading Mr. Quick's *Hawkeye* makes one feel as if he would like to own a hundred and sixty acres in Fremont County, Iowa, and watch the bird's-foot violets of the spring giving way to the fringed gentian hid in the deep grasses of the swales in late October. For the atmosphere which envelops his Iowa prairies is delightful. It is not raw but ripe. It is mellow with the touch of time, and reflection upon things past and things yet to come. It is golden: There is a glint of gold on the old felt hats of his farmers; there is a golden glimmer all along the muddy trail from Vandemark's farm to the Erie Canal. Mr. Quick's epic of the Middle West has that fine literary quality called charm; and that charm is put into it by that fine human quality called love. There is a love which prevents one from seeing and there is a love which enables one to see—to see and yet to believe; to know and yet to hope; to admit the worst and yet to say to this Midland of ours: 'In spite of all your faults—nay, because of all your faults, I love you still and hope to goodness you will grow a new skin.'

"Mr. Quick has the faith that rests upon a long view. He has seen the average man, common as dirt and dirty. But he has also watched the average man through three generations casting his skin, like a snake in the spring, and coming forth clean. The greatest of sociological facts, he declares, is the proved power of fine talent and purpose to come up out of the

soil of common life. His prose says what Carl Sandburg's verse says:

> 'The worn tired stars say
> You shall die early and die dirty.
> The clean cold stars say
> You shall die late and die clean.'"

His hearers were delighted with the performance and were ready to kiss the hand that had punished them. The president of the society wrote to him the next day that at least seventy of those who were present had expressed their pleasure at his address and wished that he could come to Chicago more often. Miss Fanny Butcher in the Chicago *Tribune* said it was the most fascinating and brilliant talk which it had been her pleasure to hear in some time. "It was literature! And it was unforgettable criticism." Many months later she was still thinking of that "exciting lecture which he gave here last year when he made a whole evening—otherwise stodgy—glow with the brilliance of his deft wit." The sincerest compliment of all came from Mr. Llewellyn Jones who wrote in a letter, "It was a great pleasure to meet you—even if subsequent literary portraits of you from my pen can never be so trenchant in the strokes of the brush that lay on the black pigments."[26]

The theme of the address was developed more fully by Sherman in the companion essays, "On Falling in Hate" and "On Falling in Love"—his first contributions to *McNaught's Monthly*.

On December 11, 1923, Sherman took part in a performance of a play by A. A. Milne and surprised the community by the exhibition of his hidden talent. The following account of his connection with the local Players' Club is given by Dr. H. N. Hillebrand:

"Stuart Sherman took part only twice in theatricals during his years at Urbana, though no one enjoyed play-acting more than he. On his initiation into the Players' Club, which coincided with his interest in Disraeli, he persuaded his fellow initiates to choose Laurence Housman's *The Queen: God Bless*

[26]October 31, 1923.

Her!, coached the rehearsals with as much pains as if he were going before the general public, and played the Prime Minister *con amore*. Thereafter he relapsed into inaction, answered all coaxing with his ironic smile, and yielded only when it was artfully put to him that as the part of Blayds, in Milne's *The Truth about Blayds*, is confined to the first act he would not be much needed at rehearsals. Once committed, he entered upon his study with quite unironic zeal. No coach could ask for a better worker. He was prompt at rehearsals; he knew his lines before anyone else; he was docile to every suggestion, at the same time that he was beating out his own ideas as to the part. I am sure that he labored no more assiduously over the protagonist of one of his essays than he labored over the old gentleman he was to portray. Because his physical action was simplified by his having to sit in a wheeled chair and he was thus spared the difficulties of posture, crossing and 'dressing stage' which so bother the untrained amateur, he could throw himself unhampered into the delineation of character and could depend upon those aids in which he was strongest, voice tones and facial play. He made Blayds live. Beyond doubt his was the outstanding performance of the evening. In the commentary which followed one noted genuine admiration mingled with surprise that he could so successfully shroud his own marked personality in that of another. He took his congratulations with a pleasure that was clearly to be seen beneath his deprecating, ironic smile."

CHAPTER XXVII

"O YOUTH"

SHERMAN'S very early assumption of the tone of a somewhat elderly mentor toward the Younger Generation had partaken, of course, of the nature of pleasantry. But it was not altogether a pose. The sense of age did come over him sooner than over most men. It might have been owing partly to the physical weariness induced by overwork, partly to the melancholy inseparable from a sensitive and thoughtful brooding on the problems of living. It is surely not in affectation that he writes to his mother, soon after his forty-second birthday, a letter that carries with it so much of the feeling of a life completed.

". . . I am glad that you recognize some of my feeling about John, and my delight that he seems to be, so far, a pretty right sort of boy. Besides all the ordinary feelings about him, I have another special one that grows a little on me. As he begins to tower over my head, and to be so independent and purposeful in his own thinking, I begin to have a feeling that some of the responsibility for living and bearing up my corner of the world has been removed from my shoulders and taken upon his, or that it will be soon, and that it is his privilege to take it. With him starting out with his good young brains and body, it doesn't matter now so much what happens to me. Of course I don't dwell on this idea of my own lessened responsibility. I say rather with Carlyle: 'Rest? Rest?—Have we not all Eternity to rest in?'—All the same there is a curious sense of collateral security in having *two* expeditions on foot, and really putting the bulk of your hope into the later and younger expedition. As for myself, I honestly feel as if I had already had a good deal more of the satisfactions of life than I ever had a right to expect—the best of mothers, an affectionate and capable wife, a son after my heart, and a chance to do the kind of work I like.

What more can anyone desire? I don't desire any other good things for myself—except of course that I'd like to spread them around. . . ."[1]

But if this letter represents a mood with which Sherman was acquainted, it was not one to which he was likely to surrender. An instructive passage in his journal on "How to Deal with Moods" reveals him making a characteristic choice.

"In the scene-shifting to which our poor souls are subject—between our fluent temperaments and our mutable circumstances—what shall our soul cleave to, what prize?

"Is there a mood so desirable that it is worth prizing and holding there, somehow, in the center, behind the screen, in the holy of holies?

"If you think you know of such a one, describe it—magnify it—dwell in it—as a house. Halcyon moods,—still and golden.

"Test it then: by comparison with all the other weathers that drift through the open windows of the House of Life; here by the marshes and the sea—cold moods of the mountain.

"The great thing about goodness and the old fashioned virtues is that they seem somehow to suit well with the graver crises of life,—with pain, and grief, and loss.—After your excursion you come back home.

"How high we shall value them depends then, does it not, on the extent to which these grimmer visitors enter into the stuff of our daily life."

The consciousness of having reached a definite crisis in life began to agitate Sherman when he came to his fortieth year and to press itself insistently upon him. It was his "dangerous age." The interest of the experience through which he passed is in part personal, but it has a relation also to the current of his intellectual and ethical teaching and is connected with his attitude toward the younger generation. It was an expansion of sympathy, a realization of values in life which he felt he had excluded too rigorously. His thoughts began to run on the qualities of charm and gaiety and happiness. He examined with closer attention the point of view of those who claimed that

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[1]October 29, 1923.

fulness and richness of living rather than restraint were the true satisfactions of men. Into the journal that he called "Ma Confidante" he poured many reflections, which cannot always be taken as strictly confessional, but which have the importance at least of revealing a deep emotional disturbance and a longing for a wider compass of human experience than was provided for in his earlier philosophy. To call it a lament for lost youth would hardly be correct. It was rather resistance to petrifaction and a desire for an adjustment which would bring all the ages of a man's life into a harmonious unity.

"One takes a turn at forty," he writes in one of his entries, "sharp turn and begin to be young—turn towards a new growth." But he adds: "I have never once sighed for the return of any stage of my youth. But to admit that you are happy today is only a way of asserting you know more about life at forty than at twenty."[2] He thus describes the psychological change:

"My abrupt sense that all my past life had suddenly broken its vital connection with me and become a dramatic spectacle—with footlights and seats between me and the action of my days, —wings, and attiring rooms.—It interested me no longer as 'moral conduct' but as dramatic spectacle. How immensely more interesting under the latter than under the former aspect! —Also, at the same time, what an access of interest accruing in the lives of other people, the moment that the point of view shifts from consideration of the ethical contour to the total quality and color and taste and odor of experience—the former seemed as abstractly ghostly, ghostly as a demonstration that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points—Also the access of tranquillity—serenity—blandness—joy—blitheness—elation— . . ."

The following notes are indicative of the general trend of his reflection and are typical of many others in the journals:

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[2]In a letter to Mr. McNitt, referring to his essay "Forty and Upwards," he says: "You are, of course, perfectly correct in saying that it seems a little melancholy, pathetic, etc.; though it was intended to have a bit of lift at the end, it was designed to bring out the mood of pathos and self-pity which occasionally visits men of our age in the transitional epoch. It doesn't tell the whole story. It sounds like a lament for youth. Now as a matter of fact, I wouldn't trade one year of my present life for any five of my youth or of my twenties. I like the forties better." March 18, 1924.

Jan. 22, '24.

Richness

Richness of personality, flexibility, and color, glow, charm, warmth, serene and halcyon element, golden gaiety, with an inner ecstasy and mysticity and rapture to which only one's utter intimates ever penetrate. The unshared solitude of his nature not barren, infecund and desert but a "bower of bliss," a forest of paradise, moated by the encompassing sands (cf. the objection Charnwood *et al.* felt to Morley, Mill et *id genus omne*. The antagonism of youth to Arnold, More, *et al.* with the seduction of Falstaff, A. France, Rabelais, Fielding, etc., Goethe. Geniality of fecund and exuberant nature.)

What do you like in a day? In a man? In a woman?

Equitation

I don't know what these girl equestrians do when they reach the horses; but I know they work havoc before they get there. Such a costume as they have worked out this spring—effect of a page in a play. Up to the age of 15 a girl makes a dove of a boy—the Ganymede type. . . .

They meet you with rosy light in the cheeks and a sparkle in the eye and remind one of Eve in the garden clothed in the glory of her hair, looking shyly and hopefully about to see whether Adam or God or anyone for God's sake is noticing her.

Reflections on Bliss

When I was a venturous youth in the placer district of Arizona, we dug up and piled up an immense amount of earth; then turning it carefully with the shovel till it was fine, we tossed it into a flume through which water flowed over riffles 200 yards to the river. At the end of a week, we took up the riffles, and cradled the sand, heavy with iron, through a rocker; and the last few handfuls of the residuum we panned. At last there remained a thimbleful of golden dust—pure gold.—Enough to fill a half-inch in a small vial.—Such is bliss with reference to the dross of life.

. . . . . .

We toil and sweat and say this is the substance of life; and is it only for the little bit of ecstasy that the toil and sweat exist? —*Relation of this to aristocratic theory.*

. . . . . .

Is it only for the exultant mountain top that we climb the fiery slope of the mountain? Cf. Mt. Tamalpais and the gravity railway. It was all the way up; gasping in the meager shade of rocks, hot to the touch, and all the way down.

One meets the expression in various keys and moods of frustration, of regret at a joy that has been missed. The passages, whether they be autobiographical or dramatic, have the same significance:

February 9, 1924.

In the late afternoons of winter they went through the orchards with a knife and cut the young trees back before the sap began to run; and gathered the cold young branches on the snow into a great heap and burned them. At sunset and dusk I came. The rosy glow of acres of twigs still burned there breast-high and I stood under the young moon and the evening star, warming my hands above the radiant death.—And then white ashes, soft on the fingers—an inch or two thick,—with no sign of the life of flame—but in the dusk, and under the milky light of the cloud-dodging moon, poke through the white soft ash—and the rosy glow comes through again, free-weaving its own thick shroud. This shroud was made of the death in flame of bush that never burst, of twigs that never burgeoned.

Thersites

Since the first morning of the world
There was never a fairer sunrise,
Nor more hours in a day
With hands held forth
Full of good things.
But I slunk through the day
Like a whipped dog,
Showed my teeth at Venus rising from the sea,
Nipped at Atalanta's heels in her swift race,

Yelped when Triton blew his wreathed horn,
And fleeing through the dancing Bacchants
Hid and sulked in the bushes.
Now as I lie here morose and sullen,
Lamps are lighted in the sky,
The pageant of heaven is going forward.
No one seems to notice me.
And I begin faintly to suspect
That somehow
I made the wrong connections
And ran with a bad crowd,
When I might just as well
Have been dancing to-night
With the gay ones on the green,
Or carrying an ivy-wreathed torch
Where the gods are going
In procession through the mountains
To India.

These ideas were striving more and more for an imaginative form, and there are a number of plans for novels in which they might have taken shape. One is the story of a Puritan hero who attains distinction without pleasure and then falls in love with the gaiety, charm and abandon of a French girl. Another is that of "The Man Who 'Wanted In'":

"Out in our country there is a colloquialism,—perhaps due to German *Wollen sie aus*, do you 'want out'—Do you want in—which at first struck me as droll, but now has a kind of curious pathos. It seems so naïve and so complete a summary of vague desire—simple plangent object of desire of beggars before the barred doors of intimacy, felicity. 'I ask for nothing —but I want in.' What is in, my brother? Where is it? I want in, however, whatever stands in the way,—sin, death— I want in.

"The man who wanted friends,—but followed a course of life which barred them out. 'Yes,' said his son, 'and here you are at 40 crying for society! We took a better way. Our sense of value was surer. We learned to seize upon what counts.'"

These embryos are part of the evidence of the strong impulse to "creative" writing which Sherman confesses directly

in an interesting entry, at the same time that he reveals disaffection with the static conditions of his life.

Dec. 22, 1923.

I wish to be a man of letters (and nothing else) and that soon:—to be able in all serenity to sit down and devote myself to thought and expression and nothing else. Not to consume my strength in instruction and fracas. To gather up and concentrate and intensify. To flee from official and formal contacts and live in personal relations with my world.—

I have nearly reached my term of apprenticeship. Words begin to obey me. And themes come clamoring to me like illegitimate children for fatherhood. "Come, take us in," they cry with wistful voices, "and shelter and clothe us." They want in.

The siege of the student by circumvallating life begins to reach its term. Starves out the garrison. Faint with the sweetness of the invading spring—wafted across the ramparts of his studies.

Out of the frame of mind revealed in the foregoing excerpts arose the highly significant autobiographical essay, "Forty and Upwards," which argues that the tragedy of forty is to be fixed in one's niche, to be imprisoned in one's morality and one's character, but holds out a hope of liberation from this imprisonment, showing the door of possible escape: "At forty, when a man seems hermetically enclosed in his character, an angel may just possibly unbar the door, and leaving his possessive, aggressive body sleeping there, let his spirit out for the recognition and appreciation of a new life." This does not mean a return to his youth "by retracing the caterpillar progress of the senses or by the renovation of cells that have become clogged with the hard deposit of years. But all these interests which he had thought dead are now reborn with wings. . . . Out of the death of the possessive passion, a rebirth of the mind and imagination!" If only the man of forty will cease hammering out his "solid character" and "building his house on a rock" and adopt a new set of images "which takes us out of the stone-quarry and the graveyard and away from the tedious refrain, *Requiescat in pace.*

"Our lives are a bright-flowing mist of days and nights. Our blood is a swift-winding river. Our flesh is a changing flower.

There is a season of buds and a season of fruit and a season of wine and perfume. And after the vintage, there are memories and dreams.

"Is there no kinetic and flowing character—no form imposable upon wind and water: such form as the cloud takes in the west, such color; such shapes as life transiently rests in, rising from seed to blossom?

"Come, let us make a new set of maxims, not for youths in their twenties with houses to build and children to educate, but for men of forty and upwards who are growing tired of one another and yet are not quite ready to die:

"Unfold leaf by leaf.

"Become more and more intimate with life.

"Ask no cold question of any joyous thing.

"Go to all living things gently, listening for the wonder of the breath and the heartbeat.

"Ask all successful and happy creatures for a clue.

"Study all lovely things, with docility seeking their principle of beauty.

"Consider whether it is better to change and be living than to be unchanged and dead.

"Eschew pedantry and make much of fine art: it possesses a secret of eternal life.

"Be your residence urban or rural, there is no provincialism so narrow as that developed by the inveterate maintenance of your own *point of view.*

"Push on into untrodden forests, up unexplored valleys, seeking new springs of refreshment, crying at the foot of every mountain ridge, 'Let us see what is on the other side.'"

Here was the belief in life, in growth, in charm and felicity which colored Sherman's feelings during his last years. It led him to embark on the career of the "exploring humanist," the diagnostician of social relations, and resulted in the blending of rich sentiment with realistic but sympathetic analysis which is the quality of the "Cornelia" papers. Several precepts are set down in the journal in reference to this purpose:

Diagnostician

To be a skilful diagnostician of the soul's malady—(To avoid becoming a Freudian quack). To consider the element of

good which makes possible the practice of quackery. (They prey on the needs and desires of soul and body.) Purveyors of false remedies are provers of the presence of the disease which demands true physician. Osteopaths batten on the neglect of the orthodox practitioners—they establish a contact of sympathy and attention; put their hands and shoulders into the work; minister to minds diseased.—They *seem to care* for *each case*. They are a cross between a physician and a nurse—with aspects of a *mother* (with certain long-suffering and yearning and loving aspects of a mother—which nothing can turn away).

St. Paul and La Faustine

Hasn't this been done by Sudermann, Rostand, et al. with reference to Mary Magdala, John, etc., Dostoevsky, Bodenheim, etc., etc.—I had scorned all this sort of tale as a sickly sentimentality. Now I begin to feel that there may be something in these narratives of wisdom won through—sordid experience, sin, suffering.

Breaking Down Guards

To speak so directly to the hearts of concealed yearnings (cf. that woman in Tennessee) that they lift the latch; say come in and be kind to me; here am I (This is what physicians and doctors and clergymen, osteopaths, quacks of every sort do to the soul of a woman who has a *clumsy handed husband*) (llamas in the geography tale of my youth.) Only a few have the constructive power and pride to make their own pearl and encrust the corroding sand: cf. the Iseult of Ireland in Arnold poem—the tenderness of the poet's treatment of her pride. (Ford's *Broken Heart.*)

Dramatic Insights

These come when one sees the necessity of making *excursions away from one's own point of view.* There is no provincialism, (parochialism) so strait and terrible as that of "one's own point of view." Incuriosity with regard to others' "points of view"—What about the limitation of "the strait and narrow way,"—that is said to "lead to eternal life." Where shall the humanist *observe* the play of nerve and muscle and the points at which joy and grace leap out—and their conditions—Cf. Emerson's hunger—Mithridates—his curiosity about "poisons."

Cf. what comes in from these correspondents looking for a friend.

The virtuous who value their virtues by reference to sins of others are a little arrogant. Humility in one's own sins?

The original impulse to the creation of Cornelia came from the correspondence with Mr. Ellery Sedgwick in the summer and early fall of 1923. The latter, after the success of "Unprintable" in the June number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, had proposed a paper on Chastity. "In my recent correspondence," he wrote, "a letter from a lady of established position and conservative tendencies made a generalization which startled and still troubles me. She said that the minds of the younger generation were being very definitely affected by a group of writers, who, each in their several ways, definitely challenge the idea of chastity." He suggested an examination and discussion in the light of this criticism of authors like D. H. Lawrence, May Sinclair, Sherwood Anderson, Ben Hecht, and Waldo Frank, and added: "It is a delicate task, and that is the very reason I ask you if you won't perform it. It is a public service, I think, and I should like particularly to count upon your help."[3] Sherman responded readily, with good-humored allusion to Mr. Sedgwick's previous request to avoid personalities.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

Dunewood,
Manistee, Michigan,
August 23, 1923.

My dear Sedgwick:

Your request for an article on Chastity amuses me in a way. As I wrote to your assistant-editor, it seemed to me quite a feat to have written an article on unprintable literature which even Mr. Sumner thought "readable," with hardly a mention of an unprintable book. But apparently that was the defect of my article after all. And now we are to have a supplementary article containing the omitted matter!—I jest with the sagacious editor.

[3]August 16, 1923.

But after some consideration I seriously think you justified in desiring a more concrete discussion of the actual books before the house; and I am willing to discuss them—the more so because of the letters I have myself received about the general subject, most of which show great inability to make any distinctions. I rather enjoy making distinctions; and in this field almost any distinction is a contribution to the subject.

Now, for the special topic proposed by you. In my opinion our conservative correspondent is right with reference to the general aspect of phenomena: there is a very considerable decline in the value of "technical chastity." I should attempt:

(1) To illustrate the situation by numerous cases from numerous authors, including most or all of those mentioned by you, and others. (If you think of special ones you'd like to have mentioned, please send word.)

(2) To discuss rather fully the causes for the alleged decline, and to distinguish those which can be connected with "progress" from those which cannot.

(3) To sketch an "attitude" towards the "values" which your conservative correspondent thinks menaced in the decline of "chastity."

I might say in conclusion that I am not interested in writing one of these It-is-time-to-call-a-halt-articles—mainly because no one who is moving ever halts at their call. The only service to those who are moving lies in calling attention to that part of their motion which seems to be forward.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

A month later Sherman was reporting progress, saying, "It is a tough subject. My treatment is in danger of estranging all the clergy. . . . The word 'chastity' nowadays curiously seems to have an ill odor, and to excite instant derision. There is a real reason for that.—But I have thought of calling the article: 'Gossip About a Certain Subject' in order to make the title sound chaste to my Aunt! What do you think of it?"[4] Mr. Sedgwick's comment was: "Your delicacy is unsurpassed, and, among my acquaintances, there is none to compare with you as

[4]September 24, 1923.

the perfect nephew."[5] In ten days more the article was completed and dispatched, with a letter explaining its procedure and its "point of view."

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 West Nevada Street, Urbana, Ill.,
Oct. 6, 1923.

My dear Sedgwick:

This is pretty long; but I think not much longer than the articles you printed a few months ago, in which George Moore explained how an American called on him and asked him for his autograph.

I can't resist calling your attention to a few points in this discussion, which account for its length and, in my eyes, justify it.

(1) It is easy to write *briefly and firmly* an expression of a single point of view, as for example: "Let's stop all this stuff." I am tired of that sort of article; and am interested only in inciting people to think out reasons for whatever point of view they adopt.

(2) In order to prepare the ground, it seemed to me quite essential to satirize gently and reverently a typical member of the *Atlantic's* audience. I am sure that Cornelia is a typical member. I gently satirize her, and at the same time, I give full value to her point of view, or try to do so.

(3) In order to prove—not merely assert—a change in standards, one must have a variety of material for comparison; and in order to demonstrate an "evolution" one must inspect the data at several successive points. I regard the historical perspective as essential to the intention of the essay.

(4) Alongside Cornelia's point of view, I am bent upon developing for Cornelia's sake, the justifications of the novelists. Hence the dramatic form.

(5) Please note extreme condensation in dealing with the older novelists. Expansion, as we approach those whom all the ladies desire to hear discussed.

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[5]September 27, 1923.

(6) In conclusion, I remark that this is a very expensive type of article to write: since one has to stuff and fortify it with the giblets and essence of eight or ten critical articles. I have never written an article "giving away" so many *aperçus*, which a writer with the slightest sense of economy would have hoarded for future development.

After this, tell me at your peril that it will have to be cut in half! Or that the knife can be inserted without touching an artery! Your "modest nephew" will reply that it is a completely rounded little history of the evolution of an idea up to the present minute; and that by the slightest application of the bellows the little history could be made into a little book. With this sense of its future among my "works," I naturally wish to reserve the right to "collect" it, after its serial publication.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

The heart of the article is not treated in dramatic form. It is a historical exposition of the evolution of the idea of chastity from its identification with legality by the Victorian novelists through the attitude of early Georgians like Wells, Galsworthy, and May Sinclair, who make not legality but love the test of a genuine chastity, to the group of modern writers who, setting out to describe the sexual relation as a pleasant experience terminate in "all-embracing disillusion and fathomless disgust." "In the Emetic School of Fiction," as he calls it, "appears the *reductio ad nauseam* of the idea of sex as a social asset. No lust-bitten monk wrestling with hallucinations in a medieval cloister could have made the entire subject more bewilderingly detestable than this group of anti-Puritan and anti-Catholic emancipators, who apparently set out with a desire to make it pleasant." This broadly based discussion, blinking no facts and mincing no words, realistic in its point of view and thoroughly sound in its conclusion, though it pronounces a judgment of condemnation, yet wishes to distinguish that condemnation from the sort of disapproval which "a typical member of the *Atlantic's* audience" might feel. Hence the dramatic framework of a conversation with "Cornelia."

In his letter to Mr. Sedgwick Sherman speaks of his treatment of Cornelia as gently and reverently satiric. That is only a part of his feeling for the lady. The rest, and perhaps the more important part, of his feeling is suggested by what he says of her origin to another correspondent: "Cornelia is in reality a picture of a 'lobe' of my brain, dressed up something like a lady and held off at arm's length so that I can look at her from another critical lobe, which finds her in some respects quite amusing, and in most respects rather out of touch with the sense of life represented by her own children."[6] The picture which Sherman detached from his brain for better critical observation and named Cornelia showed many lovely colors to his eye. Cornelia embodies the claims of decorum, of social stability, of grace of manners, of all the formalized charm of civilized life. She represents certain qualities that her creator loves, and so she comes alive in her loveliness on the very first page. By separating himself thus from his own attachments and sentiments the writer attains freedom to contemplate them critically and with humor. In mocking "reverently" at Cornelia he does not renounce his love but only gains a place of vantage for sympathy with other points of view.

Mr. Sedgwick expressed his delight, telling Sherman that he had struck a vein "quite different from any other and susceptible of much public applause," and he suggested a whole series of topics for Cornelia to converse about. In his response Sherman indicated his own feeling of having struck a profitable vein.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
October 31, 1923.

My dear Sedgwick:

Your cordial reception of Cornelia quite warms the heart of her interlocutor. I had a feeling, when I sent you this article, that I had constructed a rather attractive little stage; and that other little plays might be put on if this met with favor. You suggest a fine list of them—all of them inviting. I had thought

[6]To Mrs. Mabel Lee, January, 1924.

of prohibition—a subject on which we all have stores of information and I flatter myself that I have a somewhat ingenious and unhackneyed line of argument, which, however, will tend to put Cornelia in the wrong. I have also been trying to collect material on "Girls and their Emancipation," including their ventures into business. This is a subject with deep places in it. And I don't feel that I thoroughly know the way out! For this reason, of course, the position of a dramatic and impartial skepticism commends itself. I think I shall probably try next prohibition or the girls.—The political women have only within a year or so begun to be active in an interesting fashion in our province, though I have encountered them now and then in Chicago, and know their mass effect.

I shall welcome any letters that you care to send on from any of your Cornelias with whom you are in correspondence on these subjects. You probably remember that I constructed my Cornelia out of a couple of lines in one of your letters, in which you spoke of a lady of "good position" who was "shocked," etc.

Your much encouraged contributor,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

On the appearance of "A Conversation with Cornelia" in the January (1924) number of the *Atlantic*, a letter of appreciation came from Mr. O. G. Villard: "You have never done anything more brilliant or as brilliant. As they say of pianists, its virtuosity is astounding and so is its sympathy and understandingness." Sherman sent the following acknowledgement:

(*To O. G. Villard*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
Jan. 14, 1924.

DEAR MR. VILLARD:

Yes, that is a very agreeable way to "bridge the gap of years." Your comment on Cornelia interested me because you are a journalist and a man of the world, and so hear everything, while I am a damned professor and a recluse, and so have to

guess at everything—not absolutely pure guesswork however!

I think myself that my "hopeful" conclusion is a little weak. Maybe we are in, as the *Nation* would say editorially, for a revolution. But if to hope is to be credulous, I am less credulous than you, because my hope is much smaller!—most of the time.

You seem able to hope, at least while you are away from the office, riding on the 20th Century Limited, that everything is coming out all right, and *better* and *better*. Generally my limit of expectations is that things are going to be rather *different*. But occasionally, also, it seems pretty clear to me that it is just as well to be *different and living* as *the same but dead*.

From what I hear I rather infer that many changes in customs which are still a matter of remote prophecy in these parts are already matters of history on the banks of "Hudson's River." Cornelia is doubtless destined to more shocks by and by. Perhaps the counter-revolution will never go back as far as she is; but as a curious observer of differences, I noted, not without a twinge of pain, a young woman of twenty this afternoon with skirts which almost swept the sidewalk. What do you make of that, Mr. Holmes? As for myself, I agree with you that the old relation of slavery is not well adapted to our modern tastes and conditions; and in many respects I'm in the emancipation party, if not yet an out-and-out abolitionist.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

To a note from Irita Van Doren he sent the following response: "That was sweet of you, Irita! If you will just sit down and write out carefully and clearly for me what I *ought to mean* by my 'last few paragraphs,' then I will mean that. Is that agreeable to you?—Seriously, why not write me a few paragraphs, at least, expressive of your position? Since I have written such a quantity of them to open up the subject for the discussion of 'nice people.'—'Out' here, of course, no one actually says a word that illuminates anything. No one dares. We don't believe in illumination. We love the soft dusk and the deeper shades. But surely you Illuminati might lend a struggling soul a few beams of light."[7]

[7]January 14, 1924.

At the same time he pumped Mrs. Van Doren for data to supply the "local color" for his next Conversation, which was to treat of prohibition:

Questionnaire

1. What kind of weather in New York City on New Year's Eve?
2. Any snow on the ground or in the air?
3. I want two young people to go to a party from about 60th or 70th St.—by auto to some near suburban district which they can reach in half an hour. Scarborough is too far, isn't it? Could you name a good one? (How far to Scarborough?)
4. What do you *call* the *foyer*, *vestibule*, or whatever, in a very high class and spacious apartment building?—one with receiving room of dimensions.
5. Do you ever call a taxi a cab?
6. Do the police use open cars for patrol purposes? (By *open*, we mean here, *cars without top*.)
7. Could a sister and brother (age 17 and 19) go to a party in their own car without a chaperone? (Assuming them to belong to 70th St. and 5th Ave. society.)
8. Did you ever see a real log fire in such an apartment as I have indicated?

Sherman found his work on the second conversation both more interesting and more difficult. "The subject," he told Mr. Sedgwick, "if not more disputable, is at present, I think, far more contentiously disputed. And then I had to invent and bring in two or three more characters, which made the dialogue harder to keep clear. Finally something had to happen; and that produced the rudiments of a plot."[8] In sending off the manuscript he observed that there was "a good deal of character in it, various, contrasting," and "one or two places where the gentle reader will need to dive twice before he touches bottom."[9]

Mr. Sedgwick's reception of this essay was as enthusiastic as of the first, but he expressed some disturbance at its length.

[8]January 2, 1924.
[9]January 19, 1924.

"It is twenty-two pages," he said, "but you have contrived to embroider the nonessential parts with so much humor and with such pretty writing that they make themselves essential. I have had one or two people, skillful at their trade, attempt to cut it, but every time they aimed the shears at a twig, there appeared a particularly bright blossom on the end."[10]

Sherman replied with a long justification.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
February 5, 1924.

DEAR MR. SEDGWICK:

I knew that I had sent you a "problem"; and I tried earnestly to solve it before I sent it to you. I think it clear that the thing can't be divided; it must be read at a sitting, so that the accident is felt in the midst of the mood created by the discussion. That is of the very essence of the device: the thing must plump in like news that the lady with whom one is about to elope has got small-pox. That necessitates a total reconsideration of all one's joyous argument.

In the second place there aren't any "non-essential parts." You talk lightly about pretty "blossoms" and "coruscations" for the sake of which your assistants were loath to cut paragraphs. If that were all, I could use the knife. But these "blossoms" are only the decorative aspects of functions which are really essential. For example, that long paragraph on page— about "fatigue of metals" may seem merely amusive and extraneous. But it is intended to be an important element in the characterization of the "professor" and his point of view. I mean it is important for the persuasiveness of the entire symposium to show the "humanity" of the professor, to show him essentially sympathetic with the craving for "heightened consciousness" and excitement, to show in short the reality of his *hunger* and the nature of it. And the psychology of that paragraph is sound and will appeal widely to your provincial readers.

I have tested every plausible-looking spot for the knife in

[10]February 1, 1924.

the same way. For another example, the long passage on page 7 giving the occupation of the professor in the 48 hours preceding the dinner. There are perhaps some amusing topical references there. But the paragraph isn't there merely for amusement. It is there, first, to create illusion of reality, and, second, to develop the professor's character by exhibiting in a concrete way the action of his *hunger* for color, and his strong instinctive sympathy with the entire gay side of the argument. Still I have marked this passage on page 7 as the one long paragraph that might be cut without cutting out new argument. It can't be cut without impairing the illusion of reality.

The paragraph containing his Excellency's jests at the professor, p. 5, is another case that may look like "decoration," but is in fact condensed characterization and highly essential both to the mood and to the sense of reality—the reality of his Excellency—not to speak of the interest of the contrast and clash between Excellency and Professor.

You see, in spite of the fact that I have lied about it in the text, we have both a conversation and a story. The moment that one begins to strip away and cut down close to the conversation, something vital to the effect and reality of the story is lopped off, and there rises danger that the story will sound "fishy." It manages to preserve its plausibility only by the, I think, considerable weight of the characterization.

Finally, there is a whole series of "kicks" which the reader is supposed to feel after he has done reading. And these are dependent upon a lot of carefully contrived "echoes," the system of which excision destroys.

And now to speak of "brass tacks." I have gone through with a remorseless eye and have discovered enough to make 500 words of possibly excisable matter. I think this can be removed. But beyond that I can't see where to cut. I can send you the carbon or indicate in proof as you prefer.

I promise to keep the next one in bounds!

With reference to your regret that Cornelia was not more prominent, she simply hadn't "taken a stand" before the accident. The thing hadn't "come home" to her. Her ineffectiveness in this particular discussion is a part of my conception of her character. She will come out again in the next talk—perhaps set in La Jolla, California, where she will discuss edu-

cation (in a very personal way), in the thoughtful reaction to the events of this number.

Please believe that I have struggled with the problem of reduction almost with the conscience of a mere editor.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Sherman had hardly sent off the letter before a night message arrived from Mr. Sedgwick: "Desperately in love with Cornelia (Stop) Humbly suggest three more Conversations, six thousand each, on kind of man my girl should marry; kind of girl my boy should marry; and young peoples' religion (Stop) All to form volume for our press, and two to appear in the *Atlantic* (Stop) Predict marked success (Stop) Hallelujah. Ellery Sedgwick." This was followed in a few days by a letter of graceful acquiescence in the length of the Conversation on prohibition: "'Cornelia and Dionysus' will have the unique distinction of occupying more space in the *Atlantic* than any single contribution I can recall. . . . With very genuine appreciation of a beautiful performance." Sherman promptly returned his acknowledgments of message and letter.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
February 10, 1924.

MY DEAR SEDGWICK:

You have risen to this terrible emergency as I feared that no editor could rise; and my heart beats with a responsive desire to do better than could reasonably be expected of me. That desire takes first the shape of a stern resolve to plan such articles henceforth, if strength is given me from above, as will fit into the conventional frame of a magazine with traditions.—The trouble with "prohibition" is that we all know too much about it. Now about what sort of girl a man should marry I know no more than is reasonable for a man in my profession; so that I have good hope of confining myself to a reasonable compass.

Apparently you hadn't received my second short letter in which I referred to your "sweet"—not "scandalous"—tele-

gram. I thought it a very beautiful telegram. So did Mrs. Sherman. Even the telegraph operator smiled over the wire as he telephoned up the first confession of desperate love. There is nothing like that, so I am told, to bring out the best qualities of the beloved object. I have never cared much for appreciation. Perhaps—I'm thinking now—that was because I have never had much of it, and didn't know what the real thing was like!

The two topics about girls and men struck me at first blush as fearfully *Ladies' Home Journally*. But I have thought about it a lot since; and have pretty well come to the conclusion that they are perfectly sound topics. We always say the real themes for drama and fiction are the great elementary passions of love and murder. And you have simply assigned the first of them. I begin to see that this is the way the mind of a Great Editor works. He simply indicates the central interest, which must be there; and the contributor thinks out the details.

I am thoroughly interested in what you say of the book. I believe it will make a very readable book. And my wife thinks if you want the book I ought to give it to you. I suppose she is probably right, and that I ought to prepare to make my peace with my present publisher who has treated me very handsomely. I really feel quite deeply indebted to you for your encouragement in this case; and I have a great deal of confidence in your ability to make Cornelia go. I really want her to go.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

In "Cornelia and Dionysus" the dramatic interest was completely integrated with the discussion of the ideas and it had a deeper emotional note than had yet appeared in Sherman's prose. He was justifiably pleased, also, with his success in individualizing his characters. The novel line of argument on which he prided himself was one on which he had already touched in his address "Toward an American Type"—the necessity of preserving sobriety in an automobile age with a population made up of "private engineers." Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe and Mr. Moorfield Storey both wrote to Sherman that it was the best presentation of the prohibition question, and the most convincing argument for prohibition that they had ever seen.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"MY DEAR CORNELIA"—CORRESPONDENTS

THE three remaining topics which Mr. Sedgwick had proposed for Cornelia's conversations, Sherman planned to discuss "with hope and prayer amid the spring floods of work" in March, April, and May. In treating of marriage, he explained, "the essence of the problem is not the nature of the man or the nature of the girl but the nature of the *relation* between the two. What is liveliest in my mind to discuss is this problem: *How two people can give themselves to each other most successfully*. My answer to that has, I believe, something rather suggestive in it for souls perturbed about self-realization through sexual relations."[1] In his meditations on this theme he was stimulated and assisted by the kind interest which his first conversation had aroused among readers of the *Atlantic*. "Bishop Lawrence told me the other day," wrote Mr. Sedgwick, "that he did not believe there was a soul in his diocese unfamiliar with Cornelia, and questioned me as to whether I realized the ferocity of the Cornelia debate, involving the morals of S. P. S. and—what's more important—the *Atlantic Monthly!*"[2] Sherman's own mail brought him numbers of letters, particularly from women who not only explained their feelings about Cornelia but unburdened themselves of their own moral problems, supplied the "exploring humanist" with food for his reflections, and served as concrete laboratory cases for the "diagnostician of souls." He encouraged some of these correspondents partly through human friendliness and partly because they ministered to his researching curiosity. He was hunting the trails of people reputed to be happy, and that required him to follow those of people who thought they were

[1]Letter to Ellery Sedgwick, March 11, 1924.

[2]March 13, 1924.

unhappy and, if possible, to set their feet on the right path. Of special interest was the series of letters which he wrote to the dean of women in a western college who had first addressed herself to him under a pseudonym. It gave a touch of romantic adventure to the episode, the air of an "escapade," which was not ungrateful to Sherman in the mood of writing the "Conversations." But in addition to what they communicate directly of Sherman's personality and power of sympathy, these letters illustrate the development of the central theme of two of the Cornelia papers. The desires of the modern girl, the question of her career, and most of all the question of marriage under the new moral dispensation—"How two people can give themselves to each other most successfully"—were the problems with which Cornelia and her interlocutor were struggling. Sherman was working out an answer, announced in the first "Conversation," to the exponents of the "physical basis" of love and the "truth" of the subconscious. The answer was both ingenious and persuasive, and, like his advice to the middle-aged, involved a change in the customary metaphors. Lovers, he explained, have been under the illusion that there is a mystical self buried deep within them which is capable of physical fusion with another mystical self, and when they discover that no such mysterious self exists, "romantic lovers fret themselves to a fever, and decadent heroes and heroines tear each other to bits, and ignorant contemporary husbands and wives separate with bitter recriminations, each charging that the mysteriously rewarding self sought in the other was not to be found." One should be brutally realistic and admit that what one finds within is only viscera and vacancy. In that respect the naturalists are telling the truth. Beneath the skin "Judith O'Grady and the Colonel's lady" are, therefore, very much the same. The error is to seek in that particular place for the precious and desirable quality in the relation between the sexes. We should rather be brought to see that the precious and desirable self does not come into being until it gets itself expressed outwardly. The deep charm of personality is in externalization: "All the differentiation, the distinction, the qualities, which you and I value, are outside and are created by means analogous to the means of art. In so far as people—any people, married or otherwise—really give themselves adequately to each other in love or in

friendship, and impart happiness with the gift, they give a self that is externalized, objectified and tangible—so to speak—in some form of useful or beautiful activity, which occasions no insatiable and consuming fever, but the real joy of benefits given and received and the delight of a loveliness that descends on the contemplative eye like the free grace of God."

The letters to "Patricia Thorne" coincide with the writing of the Conversations on "An Eligible Young Man" and "Treating of Modern Girls."

(*To "Patricia Thorne"*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
[Jan., 1924.]

My dear Patricia Thorne:

Some day I shall write a story about you—and your romance. It will be fiction, because I don't believe there is anyone just like Patricia Thorne. You are a character in a story. You came in this morning like a character in a story, bringing the scenery with you, and the suspense, and the mystery.—I can see you in a house on the mesa at the foot of the mountains waiting—and while you wait, writing that quite charming meditation on Cornelia.

You were most hospitable to take me into the confidences of Patricia Thorne's midnight reflections in the capacity of a mere human being. And I am going to reciprocate by a confidence which you will not, I hope, divulge widely. In the small-town world which most of us inhabit it contributes to whatever interest Cornelia arouses to have it conjectured that the lady is a picture of my wife or my grandmother or of somebody else's wife or grandmother. And you yourself represent me as applauding her for organizing serving clubs among the workmen on the Burlington railroad. But to you I confide that Cornelia is in reality a picture of a "lobe" of my brain, dressed up something like a lady and held off at arm's length so that I can look at her from another critical lobe, which finds her in some respects quite amusing, and in most respects rather out of touch with the sense of life represented by her own children. Whatever you say in adverse criticism of her, there is a critical sense to receive with welcome and docility—a critical sense which is listening

with sympathy and the liveliest curiosity to whatever Cornelia's children or other adventurers are willing to reveal about their own explorations of felicity.

Your letter piques my interest because it contains a certain note of elation, a note of felicity, from which you intimate a conviction that Cornelia is shut out. Well, I am deeply curious about that—about all that you intimate of the charm and the spiritual growth that may come from roots running into a secret garden. I am curious to know whether those qualities which the thirsty soul seeks when it ventures out of its solitude —the qualities partly listed in my sentence on the soul's cravings (p. 19)—whether they *can* be nourished by roots in the secret garden.

Willa Cather's Lost Lady is in some ways a little incomprehensible to me. But so, for that matter, are most women! I can understand what you say of the normal woman's "hunger to be loved." But I can't quite understand what seems to be pretty nearly the average woman's willingness to be loved by *anybody and everybody*. Some men, I know, have this trait, also. And I can't understand them either. I don't find within myself the least element of a desire to be loved by *anybody and everybody*. The Lost Lady, on the contrary, is like the picture in the advertising pages of innumerable magazines—a lady sitting at a piano, for example, looking fathomless love into the faces of six or seven miscellaneous men who hang over her.

Well, that is one criticism which my critical lobe makes on the "life of adventure," for which the younger generation seems "going in."

The second criticism is this: You speak with a certain note which elicits interest of the "compulsion of a divine passion." Is it not a fact that the "divine passion," when it is secure, is a most isolated and exclusive passion? Is it not of the essence of such a passion to feel: "You and I are alone in the universe—sufficient unto each other—and so as much alone as if we were the sole created beings"? Well, there are no such isolated souls in the universe—or virtually none. Therefore their "divine" feeling is due either to (1) romantic illusion or (2) inhuman callousness—cultivated insensitiveness to the pull of the network of vital human relationships amid which they have undertaken to plant their Paradise—their *solitude à deux*.—In either

case the charm seems always in danger of disclosing implications of ugliness and cruelty.

That is about the present state of my enquiry into the possibilities of the rather human relationship which interests you. Whether the danger can be evaded, whether there is good news of success from adventurers with an earned right to speak is what I should like to know. I should be glad to hear more about the red geraniums.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
February 6, 1924.

DEAR PATRICIA THORNE:

Your letters have one quality which I prize very highly—joy. Whether you possess it or not, there is a note of elation in them which teases my curiosity. Is it real? Why are you happy? There is something contagious in joy of this quality. It is good in itself.—What means do you find of expressing it? In one of my books, essay on "Vocation," I place the vocation of joy at the top of all human callings. It doesn't appear to me to require any other utility as its justification. It doesn't require a literary outlet. I even shudder a little at the suggestion in your last paragraph that you have been writing stories. You write with a personality and distinction which might well enough make your writing marketable, but why go to market with joy? Especially if you make yourself miserable in doing so. The misery perhaps comes from the inadequacy of the report to the experience—and this is indeed your own suggestion. There are other means of expression. Perhaps you have found better ones. I am curious about that, and if you wish to tease my curiosity further, you will drop another hint.—You see, I am engaged in a quest. I want to find out why the average American is so miserable; why he lives such a poverty-stricken life in his personal relations; why he goes about with an incommunicable hunger in his soul. And I believe the answer is only to be had by consulting joyous persons. If you are one, tell me about it, please.

Your remark that there is an ultimate solitude of the indi-

vidual soul is true; and I have never disputed that. There is a solitude of the individual which no second person ever enters. My point was merely that there can hardly be a *solitude à deux* which no third or fourth person violates. There is a distinction with a great deal of difference! The fallacy of enamored couples is the belief that two people can be alone in the world. One may be, perhaps; not two.

Where do you get the idea that I am such a resolute corn-planter? As I proceed through the midlands of time, I find myself caring more and more for the flowers between the furrows, of which I judge you, perhaps erroneously, to be one. Of course you do not actually classify me as a resolute corn-planter; otherwise you would not write to me about your gardens of primroses and red geraniums. I really suspect you to be someone in masquerade, engaged in her own little quest of curiosity, to discover what manner of being writes this stuff for the magazines. In your first letter I took you for one of Browning's ladies, living with a kind of still intensity within a ring of fire. But in your second letter I began to suspect a skillful masquerader bent on an amusive quest. Has the "higher criticism" failed in both instances?

An "escapade" like this exchange of letters will soon die of inanition if it is not fed. I have suggested to you already some lavender which you may use to feed the perfume of the flames. I give you another commission. My editor telegraphed me this morning that he is "desperately in love with Cornelia," and that I must get her to talk on two or three other topics which he suggested. (I have recently sent him a very long conversation of hers which may appear in two or three months.) But he wishes me to discuss among other things the kind of man that one should desire one's daughter to marry. This sounds like a *Ladies' Home Journal* topic; but Cornelia should discuss it with a certain difference. Now, I don't know anything about daughters, except by pure guesswork. And daughters change so fast nowadays that I am fearful of being out of touch with their desires. I can use my imagination and experience to some effect in constructing the right sort of girl for a man. But the other problem daunts me. Do you know anything about daughters? Can't you tell me what the latest thing in a man is, for a woman who really has an ideal for her personal life, an ideal which has

changed with the years and modified itself with experience and growth of distinction in taste?—Can you put him into your dancing words? Or does he exist on land or sea?—I am by conviction a more and more remorseless realist myself. I care less and less for dream men and dream women. But if the shape of one's dream exists in the flesh, if there is reality correspondent to our desire, that is news of the first importance. Let us tell "these young people" what to seek for and wait for to the bitter end. Let us not tell them, however, to wait for dreams.

I have lifted the latch! Is there anyone at home?

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Since you address me as "professor," it is needless to make any allusion to the routine in which this letter is an interlude. But by way of reciprocity, should you not when and if you write again put a bit of scenery behind your masquerade by annotating a little "the busy round of my days"?

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
March 8, 1924.

MY DEAR "PATRICIA":

(I have decided to adhere to this name, in the hope that there is a *being* somehow connected with the word who will reply to the letter.) Spring business which is almost overwhelming just now has delayed my response to your letter. But to be candid, which is the only cue on an escapade, I was at first terribly shocked to discover, though I had suspected it from the first, that you were not a "free spirit" at all but of all created spirits the most strictly straitened cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd. I had thought, you see, that you had news from a territory outside the domain of "perfect behavior"—real news. To hear, then, that the news came from the very citadel of perfect behavior was disheartening. It seemed, at first, to mean that the "news" was just fiction and dream-stuff, such as drifts up from any speculative pipe and mingles with the smoke in even academic studies—. Well, I have recovered from that, and having

pondered the [point] now conclude that Patricia's case is even more interesting than before, because more typical, more representative, of the average estate. And I have concluded, too, that I needn't despair of "real" news either, even from the Citadel of Perfect Behavior. All the romances of the Middle Ages present to us stories of princesses and wandering knights imprisoned in strong dungeons—till some trumpet blast announces the coming of a deliverer.

And so I hope you are going on with the narrative. Your approach to the edge of it in your Chicago letter, written in that setting and with that background of sages giving their wisdom forth on the standardization of conduct—this shows that you have retained Patricia's sense of "literary values." I will tell you frankly that I hope you will go on with Patricia's story, which you may do with I think entire confidence in its being received with gratitude and discretion; also with a great willingness to understand. At the present time—or for the present, rather, I have put my judging faculty to rest. I am tired of judging things and people. I began that too early. I see with "devastating" clearness that I need to begin all over again with a serious effort to discover what people and things are like—inside.

The points, in addition to Patricia's own narrative, with regard to which you have specially provoked the curiosity of the enquiring humanist are these: (1) Why you hope that I *don't* like the sort of woman that Cornelia is. What is the matter with her? I am breathlessly concerned to hear—to have Patricia with perfect cold ruthlessness put a finger on her marble and say, "This is faulty, defective, here"—that is, from Patricia's point of view. (2) In order to do that, she will have to explain just what she meant in an early communication by the "glory" of her sex. What is the "glory"? Isn't that just what we are trying to get at? I think I know, and in my third dialogue shall approach the task of telling; so that if I am in danger of mortal error I should be promptly forewarned!

To return, now, to the point which you raised about *writing*. Why shouldn't you write? You should. In view of Patricia's circumstances, she should. If she has any good news she should. If she wishes an escape from dungeons she should. If she wishes to communicate with others in dungeons, she should.—I spoke

when I first referred to the topic as if Patricia were in a position to express her life by other means than words—which are of course only one poor difficult dialect of the soul. But if that is not the case, then, words by all means.

I send back the sketch of the bungalow. It has much the same alluring quality as Patricia's first letter. It has a sense for precious and unvalued things, which is the discoverer's special gift. I don't know just what you did to that bungalow, but you make one feel that one would have liked to be invited there. All that you need to add to the place is its own *story*, which it *almost* tells by implication.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
March 24, 1924.

DEAR PATRICIA:

Your letter on aberrant dressmakers and cooks who, after philandering in Paris with Russian noblemen, return to their Philistine ne'er-do-well husbands in America because they are "good pals"—is very instructive, so far as it goes. I suppose it is part of the illustration of your theory that "Judith O'Grady and the Colonel's Lady" are "much the same beneath the skin." Now that is a very interesting thesis which our present literature is passionately engaged in demonstrating. There are times when I think the demonstration is complete. There are novels in which I am convinced.—But at other times I think the thesis is false and shallow. I believe that there is a really substantial and deep life outside and beyond the skin, which in the case of our theoretical "lady"—"the Colonel's lady"—is far more important than the common life "*beneath* the skin." It makes the life of instinct and the senses seem insignificant—actually so. My present theory about Cornelia is that she is such a woman. Occasionally I have doubts: I wonder whether she too doesn't wear a mask; whether she too isn't shamming; whether if one really knew her to the core, there would not be found there—at the core—the same irrational hot passional hungers and discontents and satisfac-

tions as her housemaid knows. I wish to be realistic in this. And not to allege her the mistress of a civilization and culture to which she really hasn't attained.—But my present disposition is to believe that she is not a mere theoretical construction. Therefore my desire to know what *such* a woman values most in her mate. And therefore my unwillingness to accept the testimony of your cook and your dressmaker. I am tired of the testimony of cooks and dressmakers! I know what they testify.—I speak, you understand, for the occasion only.

You ask what is a "free spirit." In this connection I mean a person who lives and acts upon her convictions and with reference to her own innermost sense of what the true values and satisfactions of life are: *not* a person who lives and speaks as ever in the eye of a great respectable-appearing multitude living, in appearance, in conformity with external standards of value, and ready to visit with wrath and condemnation all non-conformers.—Of course a "free spirit" may just chance to find her own happiness lies, most richly, in conforming very perfectly with the external standards. But you led me to think in the early epistles of Patricia that there is an inner life which is not subject to "the rules for perfect behavior," and which is so infinitely more delectable that it reduces the values of the outer life to insignificance. Did you really mean it? Or were you just playing with words? I begin to suspect you were trifling with my credulity. And you put me in a box, because either Cornelia or I ought to defend your position. I don't think Cornelia ought to believe in it, but I myself actually believe in it less and less every day. I think the inner life is mainly emptiness and Judith O'Grady. And that all the precious part of life is created by expression and objectification and the differentiation made possible only when life reaches that external position in which it may be treated as art.—If you can damage this position, please do.

I thank you for sending me the extracts from your speech on "perfect behavior." It seems awfully sound. And it rests on grounds which I understand well enough. But it isn't "esoteric." It ought not to be. But aren't you going to return to Patricia? "The deans are too much with us, late and soon."

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
April 15, 1924.

My dear Patricia:

Your last letter was very interesting. My last one was doubtless very "provoking." It was rather intended to be. And I fairly drew upon myself the characterization which you make of me. It is not accurate. As a matter of fact I don't scorn the souls of our cooks and milliners. As a matter of fact, I suppose few people are less impressed by what you are probably thinking of as "people's outsides" than I. I simply happen at this time to be engaged in a research which interests me highly. I am trying by way of experiment to see how much of a case can be made out for the "externalized life." In order to do that I construct our externalized character, and put everything into the outside of them I can honestly imagine might be there. And then to test my construction, I challenged you to testify to the reality of an internal life of which my "construction" knows nothing, or shows nothing. The qualities of the good man which you enumerate seem to me not in the least mystical or mysterious. They are admirable and desirable qualities; but the proof of their existence is in action—visible, measurable, appraisable action or behavior. They don't appear to me to be flowers of a secret garden at all.—It is only when you speak of certain moments or hours of intense *appreciation* that you pass over from the world of external values into the domain of what we perhaps had better call the soul. There is something to pause over. If the hours of appreciation are themselves "the golden profit in the sum of existence" and I begin to suspect that perhaps they are—we seem to be getting *inside* again—into the realm of pure contemplation. Yet appreciation itself craves its own artistic form and action. It too yearns for gesture, expression—for thankful hands extended to the blue heaven.

I write you this little note to assure you that that stuff about the cooks etc. was not snobbery but deliberate device to draw your fire.

I am more weary of deans to-night than ever—and of their institutions, which are working me this spring almost beyond patience and beyond capacity, so that I have no time to think. I am going to New York to-morrow to look at a position which may conceivably promise a little more margin for the growth of what is—inside. . . .

You are yourself so imaginative a creature that I wonder at your having been "taken in" by my puppets and confusing my opinion with theirs. Still harping on the milliners!

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Another instance of Sherman's desire to enter into a league of mutual understanding with the mind of the young generation, and incidentally of the generation's interest in him, is supplied by the very charming letter to a girl in high school who had asked him for an autobiographical sketch with a little more color than appeared in *Who's Who*.

(*To Clover Henry*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
February 5, 1924.

MY DEAR MISS HENRY:

It's a very long time since your letter came, but I've been carrying it around in my pocket ever since, like a billet-doux, intending to write you a foolish little note when I would find somewhere a little quiet interlude. But I assure you, Miss Clover Henry, it isn't easy. I am terribly flattered to be made the subject of your studies, even if I don't impress you as very interesting and even if I do impress you as rather difficult. The fact is, I don't impress myself as a very interesting person—especially to young persons in the high school. I have a boy who left the high school last fall and is now in the university. I never caught him reading any of my books; and it was only a few weeks ago that I gave him a dollar to listen to one of my new articles read aloud. He didn't think it very bad! But of course, I wanted him to tell me what was the matter with

it from his point of view, so that in the future I might avoid being so dull to him. I like your frank honest way of pointing out my resemblance to Emerson, i.e. "rather hard to understand." And I admire your generation in general for its candid way of expressing just what it thinks and feels.

I learn quite a bit of sympathy with your generation from my son. There were many years when dances, fraternities, and football games "left me cold." But now that I have a boy in college,—well, I have been to two football games this year, and I really listen quite attentively to everything that I hear about dances and sororities, and I watch with eager eye especially to see what the things are which really captivate persons of your age—when they are not egged on to high seriousness by their fathers. My son is of the opinion that the world we live in is much more interesting than that in which I was brought up, and you may tell your father that I am inclined to believe he is right.

The biographical sketch which follows is not very highly colored, except for a bit like this: "In my idle summers, and on my idle Friday nights and Saturdays and Sunday evenings, I have written three or four books." It concludes with a statement of his changing interest in life: "The things which up to the present time have interested me most are in books. But as I grow older, I find my interest in people rather increasing. I imagine you find people much more interesting than books. Possibly when you are grey-headed, you may find that your interest has shifted a little."

The growing interest in people is illustrated in still another group of letters, though in this case it is a distinctly older generation that is concerned. From a doctor who had spent forty-six years of his life practising in a small town in Illinois came an acknowledgment, gravely and serenely worded, of the peace of mind he had received from reading *The Genius of America* and some of the *Atlantic* essays. "Neither old age nor lack of opportunities," he said, "has diminished my admiration for the writings of an individual with a clean mind who can express his or her thoughts in vigorous language." This led to an exchange of letters which lasted through several months.

(*To Dr. E. C. Nolan*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
Jan. 14, 1924.

DEAR DR. NOLAN:

Your letter gave me much pleasure, because I know that a man who has been a country doctor for forty-six years must have a fathomless stock of information about our curious human nature, so much more than I possess that I envy him, and feel obliged to respect even his good words about my own case. It can't but strike me as amusing to be put on the shelf with a Buddhist. But it's very good company! And when I hear that an Illinois country doctor keeps such books on his shelf and finds peace in them—why, you open the windows of my imagination and let in an unguessed gust of fine air. I'll get that book.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
Feb. 25, 1924.

DEAR DR. NOLAN:

All the peace that a man gets in this world, with any security, he makes in his own breast, and most of the companions that he can really count upon are there also. This is my experience at the age of 43, and I infer from your letters that the experience of the next twenty years is not likely to alter the situation greatly. But why should we speak of ourselves as "lonely" men, with Emerson, Buddha, and Socrates actually inhabiting our minds. I think the society very good and most bracing! And I have tried to be quite honest and realistic in expressing my sense of the matter in an essay, "Literature and the Government of Men," in the book *Genius of America*. The topic reminds me of a saying of W. C. Brownell's about the loss of our illusions, dreams, fantastic hopes, etc. "Well," he says, or words to that effect, "when we have dismissed all

our dreams, we have still something left—*we have the universe!*" If you think of it, that is not such a bad consolation prize for the loss of a pack of dreams.

With best regards,
Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

There is a lot in Emerson that hasn't been assimilated yet.

(*To The Same*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
March 8, 1924.

DEAR DR. NOLAN:

Have you ever read any of the books of George Santayana? He is a poet and a philosopher. There is much in him that appeals to a man who thinks highly of science and the reasoning faculty. This reasonableness is united with a beautiful power of poetic and epigrammatic expression. Either his volume *Poems* or his book *Poetry and Religion* I could recommend as a choice discovery for a man of your tastes, if you chance not to have read them.—Your library, even though a small town library, ought to buy Emerson's *Journals*. You should be on the Library Board. If its funds are too limited, why don't you get your Rotarians or your women to raise a fund for setting the library on its feet.—Even a very small town can afford to buy books of this character enough to feed all the inhabitants with appetite for them.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

The religious note runs through the foregoing letters, and religion was the theme still remaining to be treated in the Conversations with Cornelia. Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe had been urging it on Sherman for a long time. In replying to one of his reminders Sherman had said: "The religious article I shall perhaps soon see the way to write and fuse with my plan for a final chapter in which there was to be a

certain revelation of the inner life of Cornelia which lies behind her art, and her respectability, and her apparent content with the visible order and material satisfactions of her world. I think, in fact, that the religious theme may very effectively run through that already planned final revelation."[3] After finishing the fourth Conversation he wrote to Mr. Sedgwick: "At the end of May the horse with the three men on his back will try the 6-barred gate."[4] From Mr. Howe he now received a friendly warning about the handling of his ideas and his heroine: "Be careful not to let Cornelia make the religious views of her generation seem too odious. I am confident that you, though belonging to the same generation, will do nothing of the sort with your views, but I suppose I am a little afraid of Cornelia. Perhaps it is because I may have been a bit of a Cornelius myself that I feel jealous for her. The whole Cornelia attitude verges a little on the realm of the prig, and it is hard enough for anyone to traverse that territory without accumulating a certain aura of its atmosphere."[5] Mr. Sedgwick supplemented this with some further advice to the following effect: "As for religion. Any discussion should touch on the disappearance of dogma, on the profound disbelief in theology, and, if you think it is true, on the nascent idea that summer camps, fresh-air farms, supervised dance halls, and all the paraphernalia of an institutional church do not themselves touch the heart of the church idea: that, into whatever modern terms you translate them, there is something in the first of Christ's commandments for which the observance of the second is not a perfect substitute. In other words, I think there is a haunting idea of some religious principle that the younger generation does not care to discard. I do, however, suspect that most young people don't think religion need interfere unnecessarily with their daily habits."[6]

With the point of view set forth by Mr. Sedgwick Sherman's sympathy was pronounced. It satisfied at least one aspect of his conception of the needs of modern religion. There was in

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[3]February 14, 1924.
[4]May 19, 1924.
[5]May 21, 1924.
[6]May 23, 1924.

his nature, however, also a craving for religious emotion and a lively historical sense which prevented him from looking with indifference upon the traditional forms and institutions in which the poetry and the logic of belief had become crystallized. Arnold's definition of the religious life as "morality touched with emotion" seemed to him to place an inadequate emphasis on the poetic element, and his criticism of Dean Inge was that "there is not a cadence in his work to prove that he knows anything of the intimate satisfactions of religion except intellectually—that is, by hearsay."[7] But there was only enough of the mystic in Sherman to require that an emotional glow should suffuse the performance of duty. His thoughts on religion were inevitably grounded on morality, and the chief motive of his search was to discover the qualities which gave dignity and nobility to man's healthy interests and desires. This is what he meant by "spiritual realism," of which the test was in action rather than in sentiment, though sentiment was the source of action. "God," he wrote in his notebook, "is a metaphor, by which I objectify, personify, clothe with splendor and terror and beauty, my sense of what I ought to do.—Religion is the inmost abiding intention of a man's heart, when it turns with unswerving energy to accomplish that whereunto it was sent."

In a later notebook, begun in December, 1922, in preparation for his contemplated *Religio Laici*, he records "a steady growth in clearness and substance" of his religious ideas in recent years without any special effort on his part, but the clarification is in the direction of the same kind of positivism, and it is illustrated in the following passages:

"There is a foundation for religion which has not been laid by man's hands and which is beyond man's reason (power) or will to destroy. It is laid in the concurrence of man's felicity with his pursuit of perfection.—It is in the fact that good comes to him if he follows certain courses of action. It is due to that relation between the make of his nature and the nature of the universe which results in evil coming to him if he does not follow these courses of action, if he does not give expression to these desires, imbedded in his constitution, in obedi-

[7] "The Case of Dean Inge," "Literary Review" of the *Evening Post*, April 28, 1923.

ence to the law of his nature. V. John Morley (on Error)—There is always a good reason for what is right."

"Interpretation, light, atmosphere—this is the realm of human power. The thing in itself—this is the domain of the Iron Ones who overarch the heavens of the gods themselves, this is the domain of Necessity. The Universe crumbles under the stress of your spirit; the light of the universe is obedient to your will."

Accepting the conduct of life as the basis of his reflections on religion, Sherman then inquired into the bearing on this of established churches, fixed dogmas, creeds, and rituals. The intellectual sympathy which he accorded to institutionalized religion he justified on sound psychological principles, but his belief in it never went so far as to bring about active adherence to any church. He enters the following rational apology for the uses of religious "mythology": "I cannot contemplate with rage and disgust, I do not see how any well civilized man can return with outrage and violence upon any of the forms by which man, in his blindness and bewilderment and bedevilment, has attempted to represent and project his sense of the terrific warring powers around and within him. Always there is some witness in them to the deadly earnestness of life for him; to the battling fortitude of his spirit; to his recognition of duty; to the necessity of sacrifice; to the insignificance of the individual in comparison with: the tribe, the tradition, the truth, honor, the gods, the new vision—All this desperately dry old theology may be revisited, safe (as Milton says), by a man from the Interpreter's House."

He examined with interest books dealing with the religious experience and was particularly impressed with Prof. J. B. Pratt's work on *The Religious Consciousness*, which he reviewed in the *Nation*.[8] The moral he derived from it was to persuade him that "religion is rooted where it cannot be eradicated, in our whole 'psycho-physical organism.' Most of us are 'incurably religious' because the natural and instinctive response of our bodies and minds to our total environment and to our racial and social inheritance produces in us an attitude toward the Determiner of Destiny, however we may conceive

[8]November 3, 1920.

it: and produces also, inevitably, expression of that attitude, individual or collective. Thus private belief and public worship are to be regarded as functions of the constant constitution of man. . . . What psychology and the study of various religions suggests of especial interest is the genuine value of much of the 'technique' of the religious life, which many have taught themselves to despise and discard. 'Objective worship of the sort that aims to please the Deity' is for the man of our age 'a thing of the past.' Yet prayer and praise and social worship are still 'psychologically justified' as means of self-culture, as methods of obtaining a vital feeling of the 'reality' of those truths and aspirations which the intellect approves."

To this may be added the following terse entries from the notebooks:

"'Practical' sanction of Church, Caste, Regularity and all irrational things is that they tend to produce a certain temper of mind and certain approved types of character."

"Religious dogma is frequently some man's intuition of necessity or human expediency."

But the truth of all this, Sherman came to feel, was better adapted to the temper and situation of settled maturity or declining life:

"Religion is much easier to feel in settled environments, settled social strata, settled professional habits, where it becomes identified with the permanent element in the general life of man, which continues when he is gone, when he drops out; seems the natural ally of conservative element in the world.

"People turn to it when friends fail, when fortune fails; when children are gone and grown, when passions of earth fail; when they cease to look forward, when the shifting show palls on the heart, when they wish to occupy themselves with the Abiding—and when we recognize that it is only what we love that we wish to endure after us. (A great part of myself I hope will die.—I don't care about the hope of a blessed resurrection for this body.)"[9]

As he turned his mind toward the younger people in an effort to sympathize with their feelings it seemed to him that they

[9]He once wrote to Carl Van Doren to send him no books on survival after death: "The very thought of them makes me ill." August 10, 1919.

were driven away from the church by "the odor of death in it," that they were "in the fields rejoicing in his resurrection while their parents are in the churches pretending that he is dead." The problem was to discover the spiritual idiom by which to communicate with modern youth. This did not call for a "new religion." "You would be a fool if you attempted to give a 'new religion' or anything of that sort. What is open to you is to declare what religion actually now *operates effectively*, as distinguished [from] the mummeries perpetuated in various churches. This would include your long contemplated 'Religion of the State.'"[10] This was a suggestion that he developed in a lay sermon which he called "Toward an American Type," before a university audience on Thanksgiving Day of 1923. Therein he attempted to formulate a positive "religious" principle out of the common desires and beliefs of the average American. He found that our people agreed in the spontaneous support of six things: "cleanness, health, becoming intelligent, swift mobility, athletic games, and publicity or standing inspection," and so he inferred that a type of athletic asceticism, taking asceticism in the sense of discipline, was the necessary and inevitable corollary of our civilization. A friend among the local clergy, the Rev. Dr. James C. Baker, raised a question as to the place of the churches in the American's religion and gave Sherman a chance to define his idea more sharply.

(*To Dr. J. C. Baker*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois,
Dec. 7, 1923.

DEAR DR. BAKER:

I thank you again for one of your most kindly letters. I don't at all object to your exceptions—my omission of the churches. I wish now that I had introduced a few comments on the work that our campus churches are doing.—But I should still desire you to understand that my plan for this speech deliberately excluded those powers which are generally recog-

[10]Notebook, November 9, 1922.

nized as spiritual. I didn't omit the churches because I omit them in my own thought. I don't. I omitted them because I wished to construct—and set deliberately out to construct—a purely "worldly" argument which would lead straight back to the position of intelligent men in the churches. We will start (that was my idea) with the most commonplace material objects of desire—objects which the wholly unreligious people desire—and then we shall apply logic to these objects of desire and persuade these unreligious people that they can't get what they want without a really religious purgation and concentration.—As an outsider I could do that.—And I wanted to show that it could be done from the outside—up to a certain point. It is for you and the clergyman on the inside, as I see it, to touch these material facts with the poetry and light and power of your spiritual vision.—My task for this day was merely to slaughter the ox and lay it there on a rude altar of stone from the field. That is not the inner sanctuary—I know as well as anybody.

With highest regards and good wishes,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

In conversing about religion with Cornelia, Sherman again offered himself as interpreter of the aspirations of the young people who are represented by Oliver. He performed the function much more persuasively through the mouth of the objective professor than through the too articulate formulation of the young man himself, whose attitude he thus expresses.

"'Oliver,' I said, 'is reaching out into the real world, into his own times, and gathering up here and there, without very much high counsel, every thing that, as he puts it, sounds good to him. That is going to be the substance of his religion; that will be what he believes in. Whether this collection of his beliefs will acquire for him the compulsion and animating power, the "psychological efficacy" of the religions which possess a great history and a great poetry—that will depend on his imagination and on his susceptibility to high and noble emotions. At present he strikes me as a fairly cool-tempered and slightly cocky young positivist, unconscious that he is building an altar, certainly expecting no fire from heaven to light his

sacrifice—rather disdainful, indeed, of all cults which profess that they have come down out of the skies.'"

And when, in keeping with her High Episcopalian nature, Cornelia protests that "'unless the sacramental element enters, there is nothing really binding and obligatory and final in all this miscellaneous collection of beliefs,'" the professor answers: "'Cornelia, when one goes out at the church door, one enters the universe. The only blessed mood that I know comes when I feel that all the universe is holy. And a sacrament, as I understand it, makes not merely the difference between a house and a church; it makes also the difference between a house and a home.'"

With this creed Sherman weaves in some of his favorite ideas about democracy, making Oliver express his scorn of the old Eastern colleges with "'young gentlemen' from Anglicized prep schools" living in Gothic dormitories and tutored by Rhodes scholars, and his resolve "to go to a State University and get acquainted with the Plain People." This is the rebuke of Oliver to the snobbish instincts of his charming mother. To her notion of religion as a "retreat" into an inner sanctuary, the professor opposes his own aggressive gospel—Sherman's gospel—of struggle with the powers amid which we live. This we may take as the gist of that *Religio Laici* which Sherman never had leisure to develop with the fullness that he planned:

"For young people, and for people at our time of life, too, there is, there ought to be, something repugnant in losing one's intellectual grip, in letting go, in abandoning the effort to find right relations with realities, in giving up the attempt to make a little cosmos out of the chaotic materials at hand. To my mind, it is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost to desert that fine heartbreaking task in order to take refuge in a mood of mystical 'peace without victory,' peace without substance."

Accompanying this Conversation was an explanatory letter to Mr. Sedgwick:

"Between you and me, I think this is the most interesting section of all—with more variety, color, facets, etc. It treats *religion* from the following points of view:

Young Oliver's
His Excellency's

Cornelia's
Cousin Ethelwyn's (askance and briefly)
The Theosophist's and Bahaist's (ditto)
Mr. Blakewell's (ditto)
The Professor's

"In addition, there is wound in and closely with the other matters, a consideration of 'marital relations,' which interests me, at any rate, as much as the *religion*, and strikes me indeed as a part of it. I think the conclusion keeps Cornelia in line with her 'stand' in the first article of all—the 'chastity' piece. Whether I have kept her from becoming priggish I leave to Counselor Howe. I think she is more real and 'human,' from the disclosures now made. If she seems inconsistent with herself at points, I hope it will appear to be the inconsistency of human nature. She strikes me as a very discussable creature, with little knots of special interest in her, like one's acquaintances, when one really gets inside.—With this introduction, I commend her to your tender mercy."[11]

Acknowledging this Mr. Sedgwick said, "Very admirable I call that last chapter. . . . Greatly helps the unification of the essays as a book." In the dedication which he composed for the book Sherman gracefully defined his relation to his heroine, addressing his words directly to her:

"You and I have discovered many little differences of opinion; but we have always had so much in common, so many tastes and quite elementary convictions, that, years and years ago, I tried to persuade you that we ought to take a stand together. On that point we failed to reach an agreement; and which of us was right is a question that you have never since been willing to debate with me.

"There is another point, however, which I have long desired to discuss with you: that is our common liking for dedicated things. I wish to dedicate this little book to you—my share in it. The task embarrasses me; for, wherever in these pages I find anything that seems to me blithe or charming or wise, instantly I recognize that it is not mine but yours. Here then, in justice, I restore to you these feebly recorded memories of our walks and talks in sunlight and moonlight."

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[11]June 5, 1924.

In book form *My Dear Cornelia* proved to be far the most popular of Sherman's works, and its success pleased him greatly. "I have been terribly flattered," he wrote to Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe, "now and then by someone who talks about the lady's life and opinions as if she actually had a local habitation somewhere."[12] And then there was the special kind of gratification to an author's vanity which results when readers insist on "identifying" the originals of his brain's creations. "People call me on the telephone," he informed Mr. Sedgwick, "and interview me about their nieces with reference to Cornelia. One lady hopes to bring about a meeting between me and a friend who 'is Cornelia.' So far I have managed to keep them at the other end of the telephone. But I hope all the ladies will send copies to their nieces for Xmas."[13]

The reviewers showed a noteworthy agreement in catching the point of view and the spirit of Sherman's discussion and in the praise which they lavished upon it. The appreciation by Mr. Irwin Edman in the *Nation*[14] was the one that hit off the traits of the book most precisely. He spoke of it as adding a new dimension to Sherman's reputation as a writer and as an unusually successful attempt to make of current controversy something at once clear, humane, and entertaining by turning criticism into congenial fiction and making ideas "the living and persuasive voices of characters themselves living and persuasive, whatever their ideas may be." Defining Sherman's position as that of a classicist midway between Cornelia's traditionalism and the bumptious younger generation, he continued: "He knows what Cornelia is driving at, and loves the preciousness she is trying to preserve. But he knows also that she is shutting her eyes to many of the inviting possibilities that lie outside her tight and polite universe. He knows that she is shutting herself out of more than she is shutting herself into." It was a handsome atonement for the *Nation's* previous review of Sherman as a Ku Klux critic.

[12]May 7, 1924.
[13]December 9, 1924.
[14]December 10, 1924.

CHAPTER XXIX

RESIGNATION FROM ILLINOIS

WHILE at work on the Cornelia papers Sherman was preparing for the publication of another book of essays with Scribner's, who were anxious to follow up the success of *Americans* and *The Genius of America* with a volume of similar interest. At the end of 1923 he tentatively outlined the contents of such a volume to Mr. Perkins. His theory, he explained, was that each new book ought to have a distinctive and different character, but as there was no time, before June, to make any of the various distinctive books that he had in mind, he offered him a choice from two piles of his uncollected essays, adding, "The point with me was whether to select the best from these two piles and make a frank miscellany, or whether to gird up loins and try to get out another fairly substantial purely American volume."[1] Mr. Perkins's answer was that he was strongly in favor of the American volume, but, for all that, Sherman was obliged to fall back on his original suggestion and to put together from available materials a book that was "three fourths American." The two letters that follow describe Sherman's motive in publishing this collection and supply an interesting commentary on some of the essays.

(*To M. E. Perkins*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Ill.,
April 10, 1924.

DEAR MR. PERKINS:

About that title and that book: I don't think I have had a real light from heaven on the title. One thing is clear: the title ought *not* to contain the word "American." Readers now can't tell the other books apart by their names.

[1]December 28, 1923.

In the second place, what I find myself desiring to do is to make my little circle of readers an offering of what is now available, in order to keep up my connection with them till I can get leisure, (in the course of the next year) to strike a square blow.

Don't you think they could stand one volume of fairly miscellaneous character, since the other two are pretty homogeneous? As I have meditated on my collection, it seems to me personally to have as its central interest an attempt to arrive at a satisfactory critical point of view by inspecting in turn a considerable number of points of view. Suppose we tried a sketch like this?

Points of View

I. Towards an American Type: The Implications of Our Own Beliefs
II. On the Study of American Literature
III. W. C. Brownell as a Critical Leader
IV. Sinclair Lewis
V. American Style
VI. Unprintable
VII. On Falling in Love
VIII. On Falling in Hate
IX. Forty and Upwards
X. Samuel Butler
XI. Disraeli
XII. George Sand and Gustave Flaubert

When I consulted you before, you were in favor of an *American* volume. This is three fourths American. The last three essays are alien, but I don't see how they could hurt the book with readers of such books; the essays are, I think, among my best in the serious critical vein, and in my judgment they would give weight and variety to the collection. I had hoped to have a fairly elaborate study of Santayana for this book; but I found the subject too complex and difficult to treat as I wished to treat it—in the time at my disposal, and I postpone it—*not* indefinitely.

A good many of the essays in this list will be fresh—for book-readers. The first has never been printed—though it

seems to please audiences very much: I gave it last week to an audience of 5000 at Ann Arbor, and probably 2500 others have heard it. The George Sand has been printed only in an edition of 1200 copies of the Letters. The Disraeli appeared in two numbers of the *Bookman*, etc.—They tried to give me the impression that every schoolmaster in Michigan and Illinois was hungry for a copy of "Towards an American Type" —and I have had difficulty in preventing its being printed by interested friends, including the Assoc. Press. I shall give it once more in New Orleans in June. The three more or less informal essays in *McNaught's* have a sort of "personal" note, which seems to take some readers who don't rise to one's more austere vein.

Please don't think that I'm trying to "crack up" this collection to you. I'm only trying to describe it a little. It is a miscellany; and I don't deny that I prefer a more firmly composed volume. But I deny that it is composed of "sweepings." I put months of work into the Disraeli alone. And I think the thing contains as much that is worth printing as either of its predecessors.

If you don't like it, however, don't hesitate to say so! and if you don t like the title, let us try again.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

P.S. My copy of *Men of Letters* came yesterday. Whatever one thinks of the text, it is a perfectly *beautiful book*, and the *lettering* on the cover alone is worth the price of admission.

(*To The Same*)

1116 West Nevada Street, Urbana, Ill.,
June 6, 1924.

DEAR MR. PERKINS:

I am sending you to-day, by registered mail, the manuscript of *Points of View*—complete except for a paragraph or two of preface and acknowledgment. I apologize for a few pages of the copy which I couldn't get into shape in time to have retyped; but I think all the rest is fair.

You will notice that I have added to my original table of contents several short pieces. I have persuaded myself that these will add variety and flavor to the collection. One or two of them are frankly skits—e.g. the one on Gertrude Stein. I put that in, for example, because it seemed to cause a great many people much amusement; and it is very short. The short notices of Tarkington and Kelley ("Where There Are No Rotarians") make side lights on the full length commentary on Sinclair Lewis. The little piece on Oscar Straus pleased Straus himself very much; and, in view of my alleged anti-Semitism, I should rather like to record admiration for a good Jew; besides that, I am an enthusiastic "booster" for autobiography. The little piece on B. Matthews defines an attitude, and hooks on naturally to the Sam Butler, which follows. Etc.

But if you object to any or all of the additions, I shall not be obstinate about them. I have quite deliberately mixed these little sketches with portraits in gilt frames, to try the effect of that sort of exhibition; and I plan to say a word about that in my prefatory note. Yet if you loathe the effect in advance, I am subject to conversion.

Points of View, appearing simultaneously with *My Dear Cornelia*, was on the whole well received. There was, however, one captious review by Mary Colum, the more noteworthy as it was written for the journal which Sherman himself was then editing.[2] Characterizing the outlook of the book as "puzzled and bewildered and illogical," she went on to speak of Sherman as "a pessimist making a frantic effort to be optimistic about America," "a liberal, even a radically minded man, making an equally frantic effort to bring his pessimistic and illogical mind in line with the ideas of certain orthodox professors and certain excellent and subtle, if passionless and unpoetic critics." She says this while admiring the "discerning" and "very convincing" essay on Mr. Brownell, as though unmindful that Sherman had indicated, perhaps with some subtlety, his own awareness of Mr. Brownell's limitation on the side of intensity and passion. It is the reader of the review who becomes

[2] "Books," February 8, 1925.

"puzzled and bewildered" at Mrs. Colum's discovery that "to Mr. Brownell's bourgeois condescension to the aristocrat, which he conceives to be a sign of true democracy, Mr. Sherman adds a private bourgeois rage of his own against peasants, or what he conceives to be peasants." The use of "bourgeois" as an epithet of "condescension" does make a reviewer's point unanswerable. Mrs. Colum even brings in, somewhat periphrastically, the old complaints about the narrowness of Sherman's Americanism—"his militant support of that literature which flatters the pride of precedence in what Mr. Van Wyck Brooks calls 'hereditary Americans'"—and his unreliableness as a critic of living writers. The first of these objections is not supported by any examples and can have but small reference to the contents of the book under discussion, the other is inspired by her disagreement with the essay on Sinclair Lewis. Here Mrs. Colum gets her effect by calling the essay "rapturous," which is an epithet no fair-minded critic would apply to it, and by exclaiming with horror that "he can seriously compare Lewis with Flaubert and to Flaubert's disadvantage." This is sheer misrepresentation, for what Sherman says in his comparison of the two writers is that the divergence between them "is not all to the advantage of Flaubert."[3] It is the sort of exposition that is not atoned for by any amount of praise lavished on Sherman's criticism of dead writers in the essays on Samuel Butler, the Sand-Flaubert Correspondence, and the Disraelian Irony. Aiming at profundity, it not only betrays the reviewer's own prejudices but raises doubts as to her entire sincerity.

A number of the essays in *Points of View* were written during the winter and spring of 1924 along with the Cornelia papers and amid a pressure of other tasks that grew more burdensome from week to week. Work was the habit of Sherman's life, and he had bent his shoulders under it with the feeling that that was what his shoulders were made for. But now signs began to appear that he was reaching the limit of his endurance. From a man who was not given to complaining about his burdens the frequency of the references to his fatigue become signifi-

[3]It is interesting to remark that in a review of this book in the *Independent* (November 29, 1924), Mr. Ernest Boyd had written: "The author of *Babbitt* is compared with Flaubert and to Flaubert's disadvantage."

cant. "I find myself this spring just too busy to live," he writes in one letter; "and I manage to carry on. Only that is habitual."[4] He was looking forward to a year of sabbatical "relaxation," but whatever that relaxation might come to in the event, for the time being it meant only an intensifying of the pressure to bring together the many loose ends that are normally carried over from one year to another. "If I should set down in black and white the number of things that I have done this last month," he says to another correspondent, "I should not believe it myself—if I didn't make it seem small by the number that still remain to do."[5] "The horse with three men on his back" was the way in which he described himself in a letter to Mr. Sedgwick.[6]

It was characteristic of Sherman that, carrying three men on his back, he should yet have spared himself no exertion when any demand was made upon his sympathy. Strangers made more and more encroachments on his time, and he invariably responded with courtesy and helpful counsel. Evidence of his generosity as a letter-writer has been given in the preceding chapter in the correspondence with "Patricia Thorne" and Dr. Nolan, but that only tells a small part of the story. It is impossible to gather up all the letters which he wrote during the first five months of 1924, but their nature can be inferred from some of the acknowledgments which remained in his files. A woman librarian in Texas who has long admired his writings receives a thrill from a personal communication and feels encouraged to write again; a young man in Chicago wants advice about the publishing business, and the note which he gets in reply is one which he finds delight in rereading when things appear discouraging; a physician in New Jersey applies for suggestions for a course of reading in philosophy and is gratified with a list of titles. A student of Mt. St. Mary's College in Maryland acknowledges being helped in his work as follows: "It was mighty fine of you to take the time and interest that you did in my behalf. To an immigrant, as I am, your courtesy and your kindness were as stimulating as they

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[4]To Jacob Zeitlin, March 8, 1924.
[5]To Mrs. Mabel Lee, May 11, 1924.
[6]May 19, 1924.

were inspiring. If all Americans were like you in their treatment of foreigners, I doubt very much if there would be any such thing as an 'assimilation problem' in the United States." Still another person writes, "Even a nod of recognition, in the shape of a line or two from you, fills me with pride and inspiration, and brings me unmixed satisfaction." The graciousness of Sherman's letters is illustrated in a note thanking a correspondent for a book, and their specific and painstaking helpfulness in his advice on writing to Mrs. Mabel Lee. The former belongs to the previous year but is worth giving for its characteristic flavor.

(*To Josephine C. Chandler*)

1116 West Nevada Street,
Urbana, Illinois.
April 29, 1923.

My dear Miss Chandler:

Many thanks for *The Spoon River Country*, which you so kindly sent, and which I have just read through. Two or three weeks ago my friend Carl Van Doren was here and told me of a remarkable book on the Spoon River Country; to-day I discover that I have possessed it for a week or more unopened. It seems to me that you have performed a service to the poet and still more to the rest of us in exhibiting the deep roots which the *Anthology* has in the soil. You have really justified pilgrimages into the land. Your book will help tether the atmosphere of legend and history over the locality. I find something very satisfying, too, in the fact that you are not a visitor to these regions but a native with as good a right as the poet to use this material. Your book is quite delightfully written, and, as for me, it has given me a bit of that "nostalgia of unknown lands." It has given me more of a sentiment for Illinois soil than anything else that I have read, and since I have lived in it now almost half my life, I value the gift. It is good for us to learn to love the things we live with.

With best regards and good wishes,

Very sincerely yours,
Stuart P. Sherman.

(*To "Patricia Thorne"*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
May 11, 1924.

My dear Patricia:

. . . The sketches are excellent as far as they go.The detail is sound. The strokes are right. The color is adequate. There is a pleasant humor in them. They would serve well in a book on Mexico. (Now turn the page.)

But they are only sketches! And isolated from their context, they haven't a great deal of weight. It is hard to make a sketch seem—important. There are three ways of doing so: one is to collect them till quantity gives mass; one is to introduce plot till you approach a story; one is to handle material which is both rare and exciting. Then there is a fourth: to cut deep under the surface into the heart of a sketched incident. There is a fifth: the sketcher may let herself out till she really becomes the center.

Your bathing-suit incident is amusing and instructive enough; so is the pawning incident; so are they all. If they go to the right market, I don't see why there should be difficulty in selling them. Have you tried any of them in the *Atlantic* Contributors' Club? They are just of the sort, I should say, for that. There must be many other markets but I don't know the market, because I have never tried myself nor studied the sketch market. I understand that the "Literary Review" of the *Post* is soon to be transformed into a magazine. If that takes place, it might become a market.

One of my staff, after a year in China, tried some sketches, for she was terribly enthusiastic about the Orient, and she is also very intelligent. She got lots of stuff into them; but she failed to get an effect because the impact of her personality was not felt—for anything. I suspect a sketch or travel writer has got to have a *point of view; a point of view; a point of view.* And that she has *got* to betray it, make it known, make it felt, *harp on it.* She must stand or fall by it.

Your sketches, as I said, are excellent. They are very well done. The material is fairly interesting. *But* I do not feel a unique observer behind the material. Somehow, you must

learn to cut deeper into your own heart, or soul, or whatever it is you appreciate with! You are too reticent.—You suggest but you don't quite give. You are not merciless enough with your self or your object.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

The impression gained from these letters is precisely the one that was carried away by Mr. Frank Swinnerton, whose first lecture tour in America brought him to the University of Illinois toward the end of January in 1924 and threw him for a night on Sherman's hospitality. "It was one of the most attractive personalities—to myself," he wrote after Sherman's death, "that I have ever encountered. Sherman was a very shy, quiet man, who fled from the general society of men; but he was none the less deeply liked and respected by those who came closely into contact with him. The reason for this was in part his modesty, but in part also his extraordinary sympathy. He gave me the impression of being a poet, with a love of beauty which only the very rarest of men possess. . . . Sherman was not a verbose talker, but he did not strike me as a silent man. With that little smile which he so frequently wore, with the almost lisping, quiet voice which made me instantly at ease with him, with his reserve, his darkness and fineness of feature, he kept an admirable lightness of tone. There was quality in him, and there was delicacy. Impossible, I think, to know him without liking and respecting him—very much indeed—more than one likes and respects most of those who are not one's intimate friends."[7] There is also a letter of Sherman's to Mr. Swinnerton to prove that the liking was not one-sided.

(*To Frank Swinnerton*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
February 3, 1924.

DEAR MR. SWINNERTON:

Your very sweet-tempered letter—the felicity of Felix under affliction is a constant marvel to me—came some time ago. Its

[7] "The Londoner," *Bookman*, December, 1926.

lack of a good address was, I suppose, a deliberate device to prevent my burdening your mail with a long letter. I will not be long. I have resolved for your sake to be very brief. It must be a sore cross to have all your one-night stands keeping in touch with you across the continent. But I insist on saying once more that your lectures here were "awfully" successful, and a very good thing for "British letters." They are actually reading you all around town. So that I hope they are going to prove to be a good thing for the Author of *Nocturne*—and better still for the author of *September*. As you are fond of informal comment I must report the epithet given you by Miss Ida Zeitlin of Doran's. She writes to me, "Isn't he a duck!" Do you know, surely you know, the American language well enough to recognize that a "duck" is just about the nicest thing that a person can be—it is several shades more affectionate than a "dear." I myself have once or twice in a lifetime been called a "dear"; but no one, so far as I know, has ever been so deeply moved as to call me a "duck." That is to be taken to the heart. But I'm running on. This will never do. I hope you have got over your singer's sore throat.

We all send our kindest remembrances and best wishes.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Early in April of this year Mr. Julian Mason of the New York *Herald Tribune* came to Urbana and startled Sherman with an invitation to become literary editor of that paper. It was a possibility that had never entered his mind, unless as a fleeting fancy. His first answer to Mr. Mason was a flat refusal. Whatever restless ambition he might once have harbored in his breast for an editorial office had had ample time to cool. He had had enough administrative responsibility to satisfy him and had become weary of university routine, and the position that was offered him looked like a change from one kind of routine to another. What he really wanted at this time was freedom for writing, and the hope he secretly cherished was to accumulate a moderate competence that would make him independent of a salaried office. Even the best university salary, however, offered no good prospect for realizing such a hope. Evidently Mr. Mason became aware in which direction

the wind blew, and that attachment to the university was not the decisive factor in Sherman's reluctance, even though the habit of years counted for something. At any rate, he redoubled his efforts, giving Sherman assurance that he could have all the help he desired for managing the business of his department and that he would be the absolute master of his own time; he was not even to be bound to any definite requirements in the way of writing but would himself be the judge of when and what to write. Under this temptation Sherman began to waver but still interposed objections and difficulties, such as his unwillingness to give up his summer "vacation" and his impending sabbatical year, and Mr. Mason left Urbana without having won him over.

From New York he renewed the attack with the following night letter: "Is there not something we can talk over before accepting your decision as final? If for instance the editorial management end of it bothers you, could we not work out some arrangement by which you would be the literary critic with an assistant as executive editor of the weekly magazine, or are there any points of hours or vacation or salary that might be adjusted? We want you very much, and are anxious to meet your wishes."[8] This was reinforced by a message from Mr. Ogden Reid urging Sherman to come on to New York for a conference and to bring Mrs. Sherman with him, as one who would have a large part in making the final decision. The invitation was accepted. Mr. and Mrs. Reid were the most charming of hosts, and the various members of the *Herald Tribune* "family" vied with one another in cordiality. Both Sherman and Mrs. Sherman were impressed with the quality of interest in the personalities of the owners of the paper and of the men with whom they would be associated in the work. They felt that atmosphere of superior vitality which had for some time been the object of Sherman's quest. Sherman consented to accept the position if Mr. Reid would obtain the services of Irita Van Doren to share the editorial responsibility, and with this understanding he returned to Urbana.

Mrs. Van Doren was then acting as literary editor of the *Nation*. In that capacity she had for an entire year been

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[8]April 12, 1924.

trying to wring a contribution from Sherman and had received instead expressions of the liveliest interest in her career and protestations of personal regard or affection. "Out of my deep regard for the Literary Editor," he wrote to her, "I have suffered myself quite a bit on account of my failure to contribute any literary token of that regard. But after my classification in your columns as a Ku Klux critic . . . somehow the breath of inspiration has ceased to blow from that quarter. If you will edit another paper anywhere, I will send you an article in 24 hours!"[9] That the last sentence was no idle compliment is proved by the importance which he attached to her coöperation in determining his own decision. Mrs. Van Doren naturally hesitated to give up a position which she was enjoying, but on April 23rd she wired that she had made up her mind to join "the great adventure" and thereby settled the whole problem.

This is the external account of how Sherman came to give up his professorship at the University of Illinois and to embark on the career of literary journalism. It is natural, however, that people should seek an explanation of the deeper motives which caused him to make such an unexpected rupture in his career. He enjoyed a remarkable distinction among teachers of literature throughout the country; he was honored in his own community and had declined opportunities of translation to places which were commonly looked upon as conferring greater prestige; he had for many years been preaching loyalty to the provinces, and he was the most eloquent champion in America of the idea of the state university. To renounce all this for a position on a New York newspaper seemed like a denial of his life's work. The explanation that Sherman himself gave for the step in "An Interview with a Newcomer in New York,"[10] though it contains a good share of the truth, can hardly be accepted as a faithful statement of the actuating forces. For one thing, it was written in a deliberately provocative spirit, in answer to a kind of challenge, and with no opportunity omitted for the free play of his wit. For another thing, it was composed more than a year after the fact, and in the interval

[9]December 20, 1923.

[10]*Scribner's Magazine*, November, 1925; *Shaping Men and Women*, p. 87 ff.

he had found it possible to think of many good reasons which might not have weighed as seriously in the original deliberations.

That Sherman had in late years become more and more dissatisfied with the temper of academic life is abundantly clear from the trend of his writing. The feeling was by no means of recent growth. One sees it very vigorously expressed in a letter to Mr. More in 1918,[11] and it emerges repeatedly in his notebooks in such passages as this: "The academic is like water borne from the hills to the aqueduct. You cannot get at it. It remains for the city a closed source of refreshment in wooden containers. It is turned on and off by a small tap in the classroom. It runs through the land without watering it." The academic point of view, he says again, "lacks two virtues one cannot do without and touch at greatness: courage and love." When Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe in 1920 asked him for a letter to be used in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* or *Graduates' Magazine* on the status of the professor, Sherman said that he began an answer but suppressed it because it became too radical, his conclusion being that "when the professor gets tired of teaching boys who know nothing and wants time to write his own thoughts and to address men—he ought to resign. That is a great truth, but it should not be told to the laity."[12]

He had also often enough given vent to his irritation with the low standards prevailing in his profession. Its members, he thought, took their bent and settled down prematurely, stopped growing after they had taken their *pli*. The industrious ones early reached the limit of their intellectual expansion and lost their personality in science. This was well enough for a man of science, but if one was an artist it led to tragic results. The danger to personality came not only from an impersonal science but from the pressure of the institution upon the individual. One becomes an official spokesman, a mouthpiece of an organization, "saying things in public to which he has been committed by the makers of his platform, by the traditions of his class, by the Constitution of the United States, by the Apostles' Creed, or by the Book of Genesis." It is true that Sherman

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[11]See pp. 346–347.

[12]April 15, 1920.

had borne the burden of official spokesmanship more than most professors. Moreover, he discovered, looking at the object with that clearness of vision which comes with a certain detachment, that "institutions and organizations are not especially friendly to truth. Why should they be? There are other matters in which they are vastly more concerned—their own perpetuation, power, and progress, for examples."[13]

As he contemplated his own situation in such a light as this, there came over him a fear of the dead monotony before him, the straight prairie road ahead without a turning. He wanted to leave the stratum in which he seemed to be fixed. He experienced an artist's longing for adventure and freedom. It had become clear to him that his profession was no longer his calling. His calling was more and more to deal with the contemporary world and with men of his own generation. At the university he continued to do this only by working double time. It was not, he believed, what he was really paid for, but was valued only as publicity.

And now someone came to him and offered him a chance to do as he pleased, to write what he pleased, to come in touch with "wild young spirits," to react to them and report about them. If there were persons who thought he was going to the devil, he was willing to go by way of experiment. He had seen what there was in teaching, had liked it, had enjoyed young people, had magnified it. Now it was his business to see what the other sphere had to offer him. There he hoped, at least, to find people applying what the universities had been teaching, and more open-mindedly, with more of a welcome for life. For eighteen years he had been an official, thinking departmentally, thinking from the university point of view, writing and speaking from the academic point of view, and to the best of his ability interpreting it; for the rest of his life he would try whatever opportunities were open to him for becoming an individual and for stating the truth as he saw it. Perhaps life would acquire more "flavor, tang and zest than when [he] dipped it from the big official cauldron."

This summary represents the crystallized shape which the arguments assumed in Sherman's mind after the decision was

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[13]Address to the New York Rotarians.

made. It is amply clear that he was actuated primarily by a desire for a change of intellectual air rather than for relief from a burdensome task. If it had been the latter, he might have availed himself of President Kinley's readiness to take the administration of the English Department from his shoulders. The university would have done anything within its power to retain him on the campus. Nor should it be supposed that he made up his mind without considerable misgiving at the step he was about to take and without a strong pang at the thought of separation. While he was still in suspense, he entered this significant meditation in his journal:

Desperate Acts

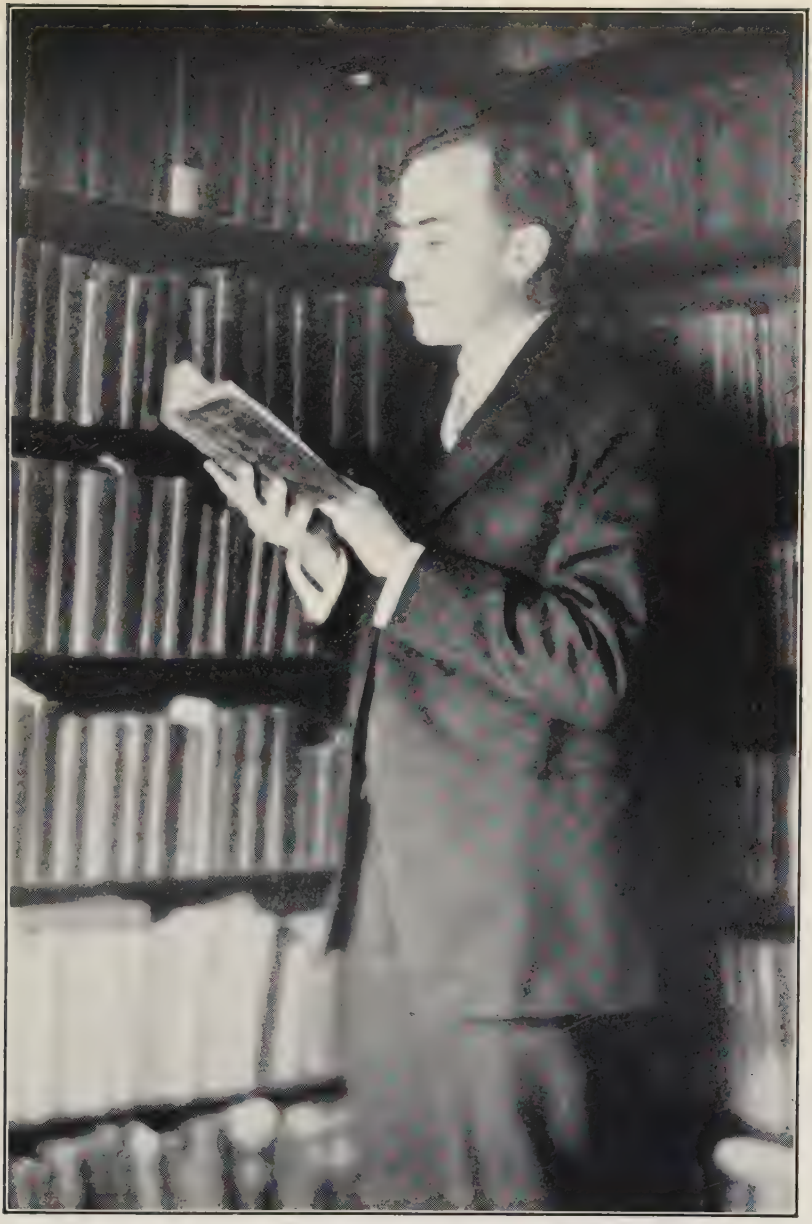
Sympathy with people who act wildly in desperation—their one chance. Cornered rats. Ants on log in fire. Fired out of a home in the heart of a log, running to and fro, up and down, seeking a thoroughfare across the leaping flame. Old age, disease, etc.—as the incentive to one more desperate clutching at life. Operation (surgical) as the thin path across—; you may come up on health, you may go into the abyss.—(Cf. people who quit their professions in mid-life; devour their libraries; cut into their roots; sever all the sappy roots of association; and go to live in Florence, M. Beerbohm—London, C. W. Alvord—or elsewhere—: it requires much faith in the capacity of the mind and feeling to germinate anew)—My roots were not *essentially* local,—

> My roots are still bleeding—
> Trees that grow on the face of rocky cliffs——.

And when the question was settled he confided his emotions to the same private repository in the following words:

Realizations—(April 24, 1924)

Study what we call emotions, but what are in fact, with me, at least, waves of lively and sometimes poignant appreciation, in which the whole vital value of things, periods, times, are present in consciousness to the exclusion of other considerations. E. g., when last night there came over me like a strong wave a sense of all that I should leave and lose in personal



Photograph by ***Lois Zeitlin***

STUART SHERMAN IN HIS STUDY AT URBANA

relations to the young men who are coming on here (e.g., Secord, Landis, Weirick); and the good eager students; and some of the devoted townspeople (Mrs. Bartow—"We are praying"; and one's old friends and colleagues Larson, Oldfather, Ward, Bogart); and the university itself—with its fine promise of material growth—expansion and stability; and now this morning the lilacs and spiraea are beginning to bud and the larches are vivid green in the forestry and the clear blue of the sky is overhead—all the restoring virtue of the spring.—It hurt.

While still under the influence of this mood he sat down and wrote his formal letter of resignation.

(*To Dean K. C. Babcock*)

April 24, 1924.

Dean K. C. Babcock,
College of Literature and Arts.
My dear Dean Babcock:

I offer to you hereby my resignation as Professor of English and Chairman of the department, to take effect at your pleasure, not later than September 1, 1924.

I am moved to this action primarily by an opportunity for writing which I have been persuaded is larger than I have yet enjoyed in the academic field.

I take this step with a keen sense of all that I shall leave and lose in severing old ties with my students, who have invariably made a satisfactory response whenever I have had anything for them worthy their attention; with the men and women of my own department whose deeply valued friendliness appears to have endured the siege of seventeen years; with all my other admired colleagues and the good people of the community; with my staunch superior officers—yourself, Dean Daniels, and President Kinley—to whom I have been responsible, and who have supported my small endeavors whenever they have seemed deserving of support; finally, with the University of Illinois itself, to which I am indebted for almost the whole of my professional life hitherto:—saying farewell to it now in the fulness of its energy and power and clothed at this

moment in the beauty of young spring—which gives it a touch for the heart that it does not always possess—is not easily or lightly done, I assure you, Mr. Dean.

Very sincerely and respectfully,
S. P. SHERMAN.

To Irita Van Doren he wrote at the same time of his pleasure in the prospect of working with her, and added: "I handed in my formal resignation yesterday—with of course the normal pain and pang. The losses are evident. The gains are still to realize. Philosophy must intervene to hold the balance even. There ought to be some fun [in] it."[14] And a week later: "I have hardly found time to say 'good-morning' to a soul, nor in the hideous jam to think for a minute about any of the pleasures or satisfactions of our impending change. Its burdens, etc., are the only things that get a hearing."[15]

There having been no formal agreement during the conferences in New York, Sherman now asked Mr. Reid for a definite stipulation of his duties and emoluments. It was quite in his character to accept first and discuss the terms later. But his trust in his new employers was justified. Mr. Julian Mason answered in behalf of Mr. Reid:

The New York *Herald Tribune*,
May 7, 1924.

MR. STUART P. SHERMAN,
Urbana, Illinois.

DEAR MR. SHERMAN:

. . . . As you say, your writing for the supplement is to be a primary part of your contribution to it. I don't believe that any stipulation as to the amount of this weekly contribution is at all necessary. You are to be the Editor of the supplement, assisted by Mrs. Van Doren as your Associate, and how much you write or what you have to do seems to us to rest entirely on your sense of the necessity or fitness of things. We have no

[14]April 25, 1924.
[15]May 1, 1924.

wish to hamper you or handicap you in the fullest expression of yourself. Nor do we wish to impose restrictions.

You are again right in stating that the salary would be $12,000 a year. This would be paid in weekly installments. At what date do you think it should start?

You are again right in saying that there was a mutual understanding that your surrendered sabbatical year is to be made good to you in some fashion in the way of vacations. Our regular vacation period for the head of the departments like yours would be one month in the summer on full pay. How would it be to have you take two months in addition to this for the next three years? This would be six months at full pay instead of twelve at half pay. Or would you rather take it one month extra per year, or possibly we could make other arrangements, again recognizing our liability to you for the sabbatical year. Perhaps it might be well merely to recognize the obligation and let you work things out in the future as the supplement is established. . . .

In closing this letter Mr. Mason said: "I cannot tell you how many people have written or come up to us to tell us how important they think your coming to New York is from a literary standpoint. In addition to that, all of us in the office feel that it will be equally important to us from a personal standpoint. Both Mrs. Sherman and yourself made yourselves an integral part of the *Herald Tribune* family during your visit." From Mr. Royal Cortissoz came an even more warmly phrased expression of welcome. "I cannot forbear telling you all over again," he wrote, "with what affectionate sympathy I hail your coming. I say affectionately quite frankly and boldly, for one feels nothing less than that about a writer who has been as kindling as you have been to me. . . . It is a comradely group in the office. The whole spirit of the place is such that I have long found there the thing we all live for—happiness."[16]

In the literary circles of New York the announcement was treated as an event of importance. Editors, publishers, and personal friends joined in expressing their satisfaction and ex-

[16]May 2, 1924.

tending their welcome. Mr. Canby, who was about to relinquish the "Literary Review" of the *Evening Post*, wrote cordially: "I regard your acceptance as the best news for honest criticism that has come for many a dreary month. You belong in New York; you are needed there; and you will do fine things."[17] Similar words came from the editor of the *Publishers' Weekly:* "All of us in the book world have been greatly interested to hear of your decision to come to New York, the book trade as well as the literary world."[18] Allan Nevins was even more enthusiastic: "The news that you are to be in New York," he said, "has elated thousands of people here. . . . It is the only good thing that has happened in New York journalism in the last two years. When you refused the Yale post I was delighted: Urbana needs you more than New Haven, and the Middle West is a fitter setting than New England; but I think it is a piece of national good fortune that you are now exchanging your academic pulpit for the much wider audience that the *Herald Tribune* offers."[19] In Chicago, too, according to Mr. Harry Hansen, it was one of the most discussed literary topics of the week and it was "all to the good" in general opinion. When he wired Sherman for a statement of his reasons for leaving the Middle West, the reply that was flashed back was, "I think New York needs attention."

But the letters which Sherman wrote in acknowledging all the manifestations of friendship and good will made clear that his primary, if not his only motive for leaving the university was to develop his literary vein in a new direction and that, far from looking forward to the change with any elation, his main sensations were "the wrench of deracination" and a nervous apprehension about the outcome of the experiment. "Your telegram," he wrote to Mr. McNitt, "cheered me up a lot and pleased me inside, and I assure you I stood in need of cheer at the zero hour of decision! As your ancestral bard says,

> "'And forward though I canna see,
> I guess and fear.'"[20]

[17]April 27, 1924.
[18]May 5, 1924.
[19]May 8, 1924.
[20]May 2, 1924.

In thanking Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe for the shake of the hand as he prepared "to go to the trenches," he observed: "The inducement for me is very largely a sense of the necessity of seeing some other point of view than that of professors!"[21] He explained his purposes and hopes, as well as his fears, in letters to Mr. Perkins and Mr. Canby.

(*To Maxwell E. Perkins*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
May 2, 1924.

DEAR MR. PERKINS:

Your dubiety I share in full measure, in so far as it relates to the wicked world of journalism. But since I asked your advice and valued it, I wish to "explain my vote" to this extent. I have two ideas in going to New York. One is that as a writer I need to know something more than I do about various "points of view" which can be inspected nowhere adequately save in New York. The second is, that I may possibly be able, under the conditions provided, to put more of my time into writing in this editorial position than I could put in here. If I can do that, it will be worth while for me, and just conceivably for the paper. The notion of getting a big newspaper to pay a man for doing just what he wants to do in the way of writing literary criticism and observations on "Life," is somehow inviting to my spirit. If, however, I find that this hope doesn't work out, and that they don't want me for what I want to do —I shall just quietly get out and continue in the pursuit of my own purposes elsewhere. . . .

(*To H. S. Canby*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
May 1, 1924.

DEAR CANBY:

Your letter warmed my heart. I've always thought you were an awfully good fellow; and now I'm sure of it! I wanted to go

[21]May 7, 1924.

and see you before I went into this business, while I was in New York; but they told me you were out of town; and so I had to dispense with the best advice to be conceived of.—Between you and me, I enter on this experiment with a most humble and fearful heart—expecting to work like the devil, and only hoping that the Lord will in some way find me for my activity. I go into it as a writer, as I understand my agreement—that primarily. As for the editorial end, I shall lean like a load of bricks on my associate.—And as for getting settled, we are babes in the woods, and will listen like robins to any scraps of advice that you may give us—as to the comparative merits of living in an apartment in the 100's, or living in a house down in the Van Doren neighborhood, or other neighborhoods.

Isn't it too bad that we feel so much alike about critical and literary matters? We could have such jolly fights if we didn't! It's only a pity we aren't working on the same sheet. That's my feeling. I can't think of any better fun.

Most explicitly of all Sherman wrote to Mr. Brownell, with whom he had discussed his problem in New York and who now, along with his expression of pleasure at the issue, wrote to him about his book on *Style* which was coming out in installments and which he said he was sorry there had been no chance for Sherman to read in manuscript. "One thing," he added, "I should be obliged if you would do, and this is look at the references to yourself in the proofs of my early pages and tell me if they aren't right. Have I got you right as to H[enry] J[ames], and is there any shade as to you which could be improved or should be suppressed? Of course, I rather trumpet up a difference, though I remember a feeling of the sort at the time (probably wrong, as I say) and have paraded it as earnest of that tremendous impartiality I feel as to your things of course. I am so anxious about this that I can't let you off telling me candidly your feeling; of course I could delete the whole reference if you really wished, but I can't take the risk of not pleasing one who has pleased me so very much down to the ground and to whom I am so permanently as well as deeply grateful not only for the praise that is always sweet but for the kind, quality and source of it." Sherman's observations on Mr.

Brownell's stylistic theory and practice are too interesting to separate from the rest of the letter.

(*To W. C. Brownell*)

1116 West Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
May 26, 1924.

DEAR MR. BROWNELL:

First, about your "chance of avoiding the errors of ignorance": I have to regard that as one of your deep jokes, in the guise of a compliment. It strikes me at any rate as merely absurd to suppose that my reading of your manuscript could have served any other purpose than to give me pleasure. I intended when I was in New York to ask for it promptly—for that purpose, but when I returned to Urbana I found myself absolutely overwhelmed with extra labors that *had* to be performed, and I am still so completely under water that I see no prospect of ever emerging except by a submarine route—coming up on the other side of the world, so to speak, and leaving my encumbrances in another hemisphere. I shall not recite to you the tale of my burdens, but try to suggest them by saying that the three books which I shall have prepared for the press by the middle of June (since last June), two of them written wholly within that period and one written to the extent of at least a fourth of its contents within—are beginning to look like a minor incident in the year's occupations.

The trouble with my position here was that each one of three or four distinct occupations seemed to bawl with increasing clamor for all my time. By the change I hope to shed two of them—teaching school and managing a huge department. Writing and reading manuscripts are two other occupations which I shall probably continue to carry on, whether under more trying conditions, only experiment can decide. I go to New York with a very distinct notion that within a month I may be ready to curse my maker and die. But even if that prove to be the case, I shall have had my experience, and my family—wife and son—will have had theirs. Except for their nostalgic yearnings, I doubt whether I should have ever extracted my seventeen-year-old roots here; for as a matter of

fact, I am almost indifferent to circumstances, provided only that they allow me to put in a reasonable amount of time on the work that I wish to be about.

Of course, I hope greatly in New York to be much in the company of people who will teach me things. If I could afford to have a personal reason for looking forward to living there for a while, it would be the hope of seeing you and More and Ogden and the other wise men of your circle, and picking up the fragments of your banquets. Naturally I should be very happy to have you propose me for the Century Club, where I enjoyed my best hours in 1917. . . .

I have just seen the set of Mrs. Wharton's new novels. I haven't read them. The things that I haven't read this spring are a dreadful load on my conscience—including a shelf full of books with tender inscriptions from the authors. Here is another sidelight on my "occupations" or my ruthlessness.

If it were not too late I should urge you in revising your proofs not to be too early-Whartonian or too late-Jamesian! That is the only suggestion which I should have the nerve to make. I know that your theory demands a statement of the concrete in the terms of the abstract. But I protest in my heart against a certain tendency in your group towards what I feel to be an excessive dematerialization of style.

Your opening chapter opens the subject in a fashion to stir up the mind immersed in the things of sense. I am eager to learn what style is—in itself. I used to think that I knew, but I become daily more doubtful; and cling pathetically to the illusion that it is a quality of personality which one's own writing might conceivably show more often if one had a little time to feel experience before describing it.

Of course I am pleased to be brought into the discourse—on any terms. You deal with the utmost tenderness with my young arrogance about James, and indeed almost present the appearance of accepting my dogmatisms. Please don't do that for kindness' sake! Certainly I have nothing to complain of in the statement of my thesis.

I immensely enjoy, as always, your wit in the handling of these matters; and I nearly perish with envy before "feeling *safer* with the beauty of holiness than with the holiness of beauty." That is a consummate epitome of the great war between

the Puritans and the Artists. That is a most luscious theory, too, about poetry quite recently taking the place of religion etc.

With best regards and high admiration,

Very sincerely yours,

STUART P. SHERMAN.

Whatever pleasure the event may have given to the large literary world, on the campus of Illinois Sherman's resignation produced something like consternation. The student daily found its command of words quite inadequate to express its very genuine sense of "The Staggering Loss"[22] to the university, and everybody connected with the institution felt it just as keenly. Some persons reproached him with deserting the provinces which had for many years been the object of his solicitude. To a joint complaint on this score from two of his former students and to another from a former associate on the faculty who had gone to Ohio State University he sent letters of justification that have a tremor in them.

(*To Messrs. Donald Lafuze and Laurence H. Triggs*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
May 7, 1924.

DEAR MR. LAFUZE:—
DEAR MR. TRIGGS:—

There is a faint sound as of youths crying "traitor" in your ingenious letter. It is enlarged by a sounding board within my own soul. I counselled "strike root where you are." To reassure myself I look on my own back yard in which there is a maple tree nearly 50 ft. high, which has taken root where these hands planted it. I have worked in these Illinois vineyards seventeen years. I am not a youth. I am an old man nearly ready for death—at least nearly ready to retire—ready to step aside and leave room for the young fellows who these many years have been training for my shoes. At my age you yourselves will have earned the right to an excursion, to a holiday; and I shall not see any objection to your taking it in an Eastern

[22]Title of editorial in *Daily Illini*, April 26, 1924.

city if you have meanwhile watered the prairie for seventeen years with your blood. Next year I was to be on a sabbatical anyway. I have merely decided to take my vacation in a newspaper office, where you youths are already idling and enjoying yourselves! Now what have you to say?

With best regards and good wishes,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To Professor B. H. Bode*)

1116 Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois,
May 2, 1924.

DEAR BODE:

You were a good fellow to write me a letter; but then you were always that.—A number of my friends have cried "traitor"; and the cry is not without its effect upon what I have of a heart. In many ways I should have liked to stay by the ship and to see what I could do by sitting tight right here—not to speak of the personal pangs of removal.—I don't believe that I'll go seriously into the reasons, even with you! But I might say: "Great men have moved, and apparently been glad of it"; and then instance you. I might say that after a term of years—17, one ought to get out of the way and give the young people who are longing for one's shoes a chance. I might say that I was running out of fuel; but that wouldn't be quite true. One might say that the New York sojourn is regarded by me as an excursion—a sabbatical leave from my mission of exploring the "plain people"; and that wouldn't be far from my present mood. As yet, at any rate, I have not yielded to New York as a siren. She hasn't got me. I am going in to look at her critically and see what her qualities are. I have no notion that I shall be able to do anything better there than here. Neither have I any intention of sticking at that job unless I find that it assists me with the problem that I have set for my declining years, namely, working away at my own personal philosophy. That I find is about the most amusing thing I have discovered yet; and one can be reasonably happy if one adds a sentence or half a sentence to it every morning.

If I can't do that in New York, I shall turn again to whatever Iberian village holds philosophers.

With best regards to you all,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

The question was even brought up by a stranger from the East, who received the following answer:

(*To E. M. Benson*)

1116 Nevada St., Urbana, Illinois,
May 2, 1924.

DEAR MR. BENSON:

One horse is enough to carry the average man to his funeral; certainly one would be enough for me. And my bones would lie as contentedly in Gopher Prairie as in the capital. Fame in the United States is nothing but seven days chatter of ignorant newspapers. Loyalty to the provinces doesn't mean that one must never take a trip to the city to see what is going on there. After seventeen years in the corn I am simply making a "detour" out of it to learn what is going on outside. Even in Hanover you have a right, if you like, to annex New York as a suburban district of your intellectual capital, which you ought to keep under your hat wherever you are.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

When the time came for the Board of Trustees to act on the proffered resignation President Kinley asked the board to enter in their minutes a statement which shows that the administration fully recognized the nature of the loss it was sustaining in the departure of Sherman.

"Everyone here regrets the loss of Professor Sherman. He has attained a commanding position—indeed, in my opinion, the first position—among writers in his field in America. His writings have conserved the best traditions of the American spirit, and have given character and tone to American ideals and life. In this respect, he has done what, in my opinion, no

other university professor of English literature has done. That is, he has not only attained a high reputation as a scholar; he has not only done great things, as others have, for his students; but in addition he has put his stamp upon American literary public opinion, upon that complex of social, philosophical, economic, and moral activities that we commonly call 'American culture.' This is a unique thing for an academic man to have done. There is little likelihood that this University, or any other in the country, will succeed in finding another man who can do this sort of thing in addition to the work expected and usually done, even by a great scholar, within academic circles."[23]

At the last meeting of the college faculty for the year, on May 28th, Dean Babcock requested the members to express by rising their good wishes and farewells to Sherman and Professor A. S. Pease, who had resigned to go to Amherst. Sherman's note to the president acknowledging his "discharge" closes this important chapter in his history.

(*To President David Kinley*)

May 29, 1924.

President David Kinley,
355 Administration Building.
Dear President Kinley:

I thank you heartily for your generous words accompanying my "discharge" from the profession. I am afraid that you

[23]May 20, 1924. In the previous year, just after Sherman's election to the Academy, Professor E. B. Greene thus described Sherman's service to the university:

"Thinking over the things which have gone into the making of a real university spirit here during the last two decades, I think naturally of the great contribution made by President James through the stimulating influence of his steady insistence upon strictly university standards of productive scholarship and his determination to bring and keep men of the right sort here. I am not sure that there has been any other contribution to this university spirit of such importance as that which you have made in showing that real literature can be produced in an academic department. It is bound to be very stimulating to our younger instructors and to our better students, both graduates and undergraduates. And you have done this work under circumstances which the rest of us have been offering as a sufficient excuse for not doing it."—Letter to Sherman, February 26, 1923.

have considerably overdrawn the picture; but I accept without hesitation and most happily all the good will that goes with this record. It is a balm to the very real regret that one cannot but feel in the contemplation of burnt bridges; and I hope that future generations will accept the record as history without further verification.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

CHAPTER XXX

SUMMER, 1924

IN THE week before his final Illinois commencement Sherman contrived to rush down to New Orleans to fulfill an engagement, made in the previous December, for a Phi Beta Kappa address at Tulane University. He marched in academic procession for the last time on June 11th and on the following day took leave of Urbana. He spent a few days with his mother at Dorset, stayed long enough in Boston for a call on Mr. Sedgwick, and had nearly a week for conferences in New York, with Mrs. Van Doren and the editors of the *Herald Tribune*, before embarking on the *Canopic* with Mrs. Sherman and John for a summer vacation in Europe.

A complete release from work was never to Sherman's taste. He could enjoy play and relaxation, as he did in his summers at Dunewood, but it had to be accompanied with physical activity and combined with a certain amount of intellectual effort. Lolling in a steamer chair or running from one spot to another with the miscellaneous curiosity of the sightseer made him restless and irritable. On this trip his discomfort was heightened by worry over the work which lay ahead of him and his uncertainty as to whether he could "make good." The books which he carried with him sufficed for only five days, and during the rest of the voyage, "a long, dull, uneventful waste of days," he felt that his mind was almost perfectly lethargic. In England he went about with a harassed and preoccupied air, and though it wore off after he got to Paris, he wrote to his mother at the end: "Traveling is a pleasant exercise for amiable leisurely people whose minds are free; but this summer it has made me nervous as a cat, for I have been perhaps over anxious about my new job and desirous to get to work on it, and find out whether I can do it; and the period of settling down is still some distance ahead with more prospect of tarrying in other folks' houses—a state which I don't feel at all sure I

prefer to eternal damnation."[1] But when a man is once embarked on such a voyage he must somehow go through with it, and he consoles himself with the thought that it is giving pleasure to his wife and son. Sherman's state of mind after landing in England is reflected in the letter he sent to Irita Van Doren.

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

County Hotel,
Salisbury,
June 7, 1924.

DEAR IRITA:

The *Canopic* is a slow boat; and we've been ashore only two days. In that time we have had opportunity to compare Connecticut towns and lands with some of the suavest towns of England—yesterday Winchester, to-day Salisbury (including Stonehenge and the little villages of Sarum Plain). When Carl completes the rock garden, Cornwall need not blush at any comparison. Last night after we had put the baby to bed, we saw *The Curse of the House of Atreus* done in the open air among the ruins of Old Sarum by the Balliol College Players. Then we walked back to our hostelry. This afternoon, having visited the temple of the Druids, we attended a choral service in Salisbury Cathedral. Then we went for a walk on a hill slope above the tower given to the town by Bishop Wordsworth.—The impulse to see the ecclesiastical architecture of this island was perhaps strengthened by our clerical acquaintance aboard the *Canopic*. All the ministers aboard hunted me up, and offered me brandy and soda, in recognition of my services to the national morals. I read five French books (4 of André Gide) two vols. of memorials of the Harvard dead, and Babbitt's "Democracy and Imperialism" before I had been five days at sea. After that I slept and twirled my thumbs. Since I landed I've read one copy of the *Manchester Guardian*, and the guide books for the next stop.—We're headed now for Tintagel Castle. John is so smitten with cathedral "closes" that he wants to go to Oxford—for the rest of his education—poor child.—

When I am trying to sleep at night I think about the *Tribune*,

[1]August 22, 1924.

and wish I were in a still place where I could invent thoughts. Did I tell you that I hope to find quarters on my return to New York in Grant's tomb? Traveling is already impressing me as hard work. I hope the Children are going to like it, and they appear to thus far.

A steward on the boat told me that he had a job in the U. S. for a few months; but after his ship life it seemed to him that there wasn't enough to do to keep him from stagnation, so he went back to the sea. I sympathize with the youth, and hope for a steady job. The verger of Winchester says "pomägranates."

Love to all,
STUART.

During the services in Salisbury Cathedral, where not a word was distinguishable, his thoughts alternated between "Conjuration of God" and "Religion is Poetry." The complete itinerary for England is contained in a letter to Miss Garreta Busey.

(*To Garreta Busey*)

London, July 7, 1924.

DEAR GARRETA:

We have had two very delightful letters from you which the entire family has appreciated much, though it has given no sign. My little collection of books for reading on the ship was exhausted in mid-ocean, and then the steamer-letter became a resource. The other reached us here only a day or two ago. Your liking of Dunewood we all take very personally, and glow with pleasure as if we ourselves were the praised waves and woods. The thought that this piece of appreciation was composed on the beach before breakfast moves me again to admiration and envy of your happy felicity and faculty of expression. It is a great endowment to preserve one's faculty in the midst of a changing environment. For my part, I haven't had a thought since I left "the States"—till yesterday, when I sketched a short article in defense of intoxication. Breaking the "links of habit" I find a rather painful process, filling one with a sense of desolation and intellectual bankruptcy. The only anchor for the spirit is constantly to assure one's self that this

is a "period of transition," and that its incidents may bear some fruit when "recollected in tranquillity."

We began our travels here with an architectural pilgrimage, visiting a number of the cathedrals and cathedral ruins in the south and west: Winchester, Salisbury, Exeter, Glastonbury, Wells, Bath, etc.; then we made an Arthurian pilgrimage in Devonshire and Cornwall, spending two days at Tintagel, walking along the cliffs to Trebarwith, bussing to Clovelly, etc. The foxgloves, valerian, heather, and wildflowers of this part of England, not to speak of its clotted cream and strawberries, enchanted me particularly. We walked 7 miles from Chepstow up the Wye valley to Tintern, where we saw Tintern Abbey under a moon with one fair star shining in a fine clear sky above the wooded hills. Chester we judged a disappointment; and hastened into North Wales, lunching in Llandudno, and lodging in Llanberis, at the foot of Snowdon. The following morning we went up Snowdon—I regret to say that the family insisted on climbing by the little steam train; I however jumped out and walked, and was followed by two girls from Vassar and Holyoke, who had also wanted to walk but had not dared to do so alone.—Then we had a night in the "gem of Wales"—Bettws-y-Coed—beautiful harmony of woods and town and bluffs and river. There are some good memories in the Welsh country and on the border of Castles—the massive Carnarvon Castle and Ludlow Castle, where sheep and goats crop the grass in the chamber or hall where Milton's "Comus" was first presented. You will remember that this is the country also of the Shropshire Lad. I described it last summer, by imagination, in my sketch of Housman. Then for two days we occupied in Oxford the rooms of a student of Christ Church. Then to London. We haven't "done" the fair yet; but I believe it is in the schedule for to-morrow. Mostly, it has been picture galleries, and Gilbert and Sullivan. We have been taking dinners at the Zeitlins' hotel, and have seen them, Helen Rand, and the Titcombs. This P. M. we expect to have my sculptor, Spicer-Simson, at tea; and to see Swinnerton in a day or two. Then we are going over to Paris. . . .

"Though I have been seeing quite a number of interesting new things," he wrote to his mother after reaching Paris, "I

haven't been especially enjoying the summer. . . . We have learned a lot of things of more or less value; perhaps the summer will improve after it has been digested."[2] In Paris he experienced an immediate stimulus to his mental processes, adding, in the letter just quoted: "I am trying to get acquainted with current French literature and journalism, and every morning till about 1:30 P. M. I make notes and sketches for my articles (for the *Tribune*) . . . We respect England, but we tend to a warmer feeling for Paris." Sherman's notebooks during his sojourn of something like two weeks in the city teem with his impressions of French culture and with the ideas that it suggested to a mind consciously questing for a philosophy of life. He found Paris "the most intellectually expressive city in the world." Though he met and talked with a number of American and English writers, including his antagonist of the "younger generation"—Mr. Harold Stearns—and Mr. Ford Madox Ford, he did not linger in the atmosphere of La Rotonde, but conducted himself more after the manner of those Americans in Paris who, he observed, were hiding from one another, stealing around and trying not to be detected. It was French manners, the French mind, and, above all, French ideas of living that he was curious to discover.

One of the reasons he had given for leaving the university was that he wanted to work away at his own personal philosophy. A number of the sentences which he set down in his first days in Paris show him engaged in this work and attempting the almost superhuman task of liberating himself from the points of view which had attained a certain fixity in his mind or, at any rate, of justifying anew his adherence to them. We are afraid, he notes, of other people's truths, but we should get into the habit of welcoming truth about ourselves —with nothing to maintain against a superior claimant. He defined his own object as "the pursuit of truth and beauty and charm—things to be gathered very near the ground," adding in another place, "I like a gay serenity above almost all moods, little as I have it myself—I meet it so seldom." This was a reiteration of the theme of "Forty and Upwards" and of the strain that is heard in the Cornelia papers. If one must

[2]August 9, 1924.

look for a connection between such a sentence and the habit of his own life it might perhaps be found in his saying that "the happiest people are those who see stretching out before them more work than can ever be done."

This at least was the characteristic thought that kept thrusting itself in amidst the blither suggestions of the Parisian scene and resulted in this jotting on the classical opposition between pleasure and happiness:

Soif d'Amour ou Besoin de Plaisir, Paris, Aôut 15.

We don't need more pleasure but more happiness.

Conclusion that we need pleasure comes from an inadequate analysis of need. What one needs is activity—adequate activity of human faculties. (We snatch at pleasure as substitute for activity)—Active rest.

After indulging sympathy for a time with people who are seeking pleasure, one returns to the dour old men like T. C[arlyle] who talk about blessedness and work like the devil; and like R. Kipling who preaches man must finish off his work —right or wrong his daily work.

The trouble with these holiday makers is that their pleasures are so small—fragmentary—discontinuous—

Even on the momentaneous theory—question whether in short moment—of realization and satisfaction (—I have finnished the work—I have done what—Emperor by God's grace, we've got you Ratisbon—Joy in his bursting heart he died. Well I'm for it.—In harness)—the stoic doesn't get the sense of felicity, surpassing in intensity anything that the sybarite gets. Bliss (all the way up the Mountain side).

My father works and I also work.

The first impression that Sherman received from the streets of Paris—it is the impression that strikes all American visitors, particularly if they have just come from London—was of the diffusion of enjoyment which seems to extend to all classes of people and to affect every phase of life. It was an atmosphere favorable to the growth of the feelings which he was then seeking to foster, and he made the following notation in his journal, August 11, 1924, on "The Source of Individual Happiness."

"How much of one's personal pleasure in Paris comes from

seeing so many people enjoying themselves; in the cafés—talking, musing,—museums, gardens, palaces, towers, carriages, newspapers. They seem gusting their lives from moment to moment (*Dégustez nos vins.*) (*Nul bon repas sans vin*)—"The little edge of ecstasy"—30c. if you don't put it in. Fine you if you don't take pleasure in your *repas*—if you eat merely to sustain life. (Of course there is an economic reason—they wish to sell their wine; but it works out that way just the same.)

"In England, the sense of responsibility for his day's work (tea the little interlude in the strenuous life).—The Puritan shame at making a recreation of this passage through the vale of tears.

"Here all the little bits of happiness enjoyed by *the common people* flow back into the individual life. (Cf. Rousseau's *Social Contract.*)—Property—*true of all spiritual things—above all, of happiness*—of material as well—the socialization of the splendor of the State, *Gloire, Mémoire.*"

But where in this general happiness, he later asks himself, is the account of the man who is only observing it all from without? He proposes the following answer:

"For a contemplative person, the satisfaction to be had from *seeing life unroll*—moving with the *tide* of human life, is so great that he should be removed, more or less, from a desire to experiment with individual and private happiness (going into *solitudes à deux*—letting the world go by). Above all to go into perversities, strange forms of sin, and other resources of men in prison-houses, and behind walls, and in cellars and garrets. (In *plein air, sunlight*, and in common—as healing for wounded hearts and sick heads —*blessé*). Cf. the *squalor* of your London beggar, your pavement artist, your broken-hearted singer for pennies in the street—the lack of chairs and *benches*—the insurging pain (into the heart of the wealthy and well-to-do) from the miseries of the community—*Galsworthy.*

"Stabbing pain from —— comes on me like a forest of spears —Sit down and enjoy myself before their woes, like serried spears, that level at my breast.

'My joys, my joys,
Are serried spears
All levelled at their breasts.'"

The satisfaction that comes from watching the contentment of others is, he goes on to reflect with Whitman-like democracy, one that is amply enjoyed in his own country:

"My satisfaction there in the impudence to me of waiters, conductors of trolley cars, the camaraderie of the country barber, commercial traveler,—they don't feel the burden of a superior class resting on them. The baronial exactions of the plumber; the insolence and wickedness of the police. (Corresponds to my idea of a plumber—that he should charge so much an hour.)"

Another impression of the French capital, which accorded harmoniously with Sherman's sense of a "positive religion," was the living presence in it of the great spirits who had made its humane civilization. They were everywhere commemorated in its streets and monuments. One entered the Pantheon and found in it the crypts of Rousseau and Voltaire and Berthelot. "There," he remarked, "are the saints of the modern church of France; and I will back them against St. Joan, St. Geneviève, and St. Louis." In the church of St. Étienne were chapels for the bodies of Pascal and Racine, while the classic structure of the Madeleine assimilated, in symbolic suggestion, all the great forces of the past and present. It was all proof of how the spirit driven out at the door comes in at the window. "Atheistical France" was paying its homage to great men, and the denationalization of the church was not a destruction but a revolution within the church.

Sherman experienced a deep emotion in watching a ceremony at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He notes the magnificent scene of the Champs Élysées where, under the Arc de Triomphe, engraved with the names of Napoleon's generals and his victories, the assembled crowd stood bareheaded and quiet, the *poilus* in soft blue and gray, the women in black; the roses and the wreaths on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the flame, flickering and fitful, lighted there by the foreign volunteers; the simplicity of the rite, the spontaneity of the deference, "the poignant stab to the seat of sympathy for courage, self-sacrifice, *patrie*, earth, death, memory, glory, purpose, humanity—something deeper than all the cynics and the diplomats and the journalists and the poets have said. Tears rushed to the eyes—Facial muscles uncontrolled. Something spoke

out of the scene to that which is noble in humanity; spirits were about the place, wings, presences, powers, dominions, powers of light."

While responding with this sensitiveness to the stimulus of intellectual purpose and heroism in its modern manifestations, Sherman did not remain unmoved by the poetry of the old faith or by its significance to the general life. "I like the Catholic Church," he wrote, "because it has something for everyone. I crossed the square of Saint Sulpice on the Assumption feast and saw the noble monument of Massillon, Bossuet, Fénelon and Fléchier sitting above the fountain. And a little old woman handed me a paper of prayers, for which I gave her a franc. They were prayers for chastity." Afterward on shipboard he reflects that the trouble with our literati is that in the reaction against shouting Methodism they pass directly over to a shallow rationalism, leaving religion even barer than before. "They might," he observes, "if not bred on K. K. K. Kultur—they might turn to the Catholic Church, and find there what Methodism lacks, what Rationalism lacks: poetry, expression, sweetness and consolation for the heart.

"They have been taught to regard the Roman Church as work of devil: the devil is a wise man; he *a ses mérite;* he is a 'man of the world'; 'the prince of Darkness is a gentleman'.—(Appreciation of the devil.)

"I have myself been brought up—no, not that—grown up in atmosphere hostile;—but all that is best in Anglican Church poetry is inheritance from the Elder Church.

"The older poetry is the best—and because our writers lack culture, it does not occur to them to turn to this comfortable, wise, resourceful, comprehensive church—for precisely the enrichments that we desire."

Among the art collections that he visited Sherman also made a few characteristic observations. He noted a growing fondness for small works of art—medallions, cameos, miniatures, coins—and for the quality of intimacy in Rodin's statuary—"something that calls to the heart for inward listening."

Realism in sculpture

I object to realistic works of art in marble—partly because I am not accustomed to them—? partly because I feel that the

minutely incidental does not bear that eternity of commemoration—it ought to be poetized and generalized if it is going down the centuries—some totalization of broken health and wearing experience and grief—rather than these accidental trenches in the face of my neighbor. (Old woman bending over a smiling infant at the Luxembourg *musée*.)

The tediousness of the Nude: Why?

In marble, the trouble to make flesh say anything new—
By costume and setting we "interpret the age"—The drapery is the expressive.

He also drew up an instructive "list of things which stir the heart."

"1. Napoleon
"2. Great scorn (T. C. on Louis XV)
"3. Rodin
"4. The Unknown Soldier
"5. Unexpected reward to modest man of merit
"6. All heroism
"7. Music
"8. *Sculptured motion*—gesture in stone—*L'homme et sa pensée*—frozen music
"9. 'Bright things come to confusion.'
"10. Broken strength"
"They make a little ripple in the heart."

In the notebooks themselves all these impressions and observations can be seen undergoing a conscious literary transformation. Reading Marcel Proust, Sherman notes what a great observer he is of the way our ideas associate themselves for imaginative pleasure and how boresome hours become transfigured when something else drops in or something drops out. He immediately supplies an illustration from his own recent visit to Tintern Abbey:

"The abbey, the wooded hill, the river at low tide—reading the Ode on the lawn—looking out at night over the lawn—under moonlight and one star—'when only one is shining in the sky.' My apprehension that this was going to be a moment eventually, some time: going from rose to rose and collecting the scents,—not for their own sake but to steep the scene in them."

In a "moment of heightened consciousness," he wove together in loose paragraphs some of the emotions which had stirred him in his summer's travels.

Les Choses Perdues

I went on a passionate pilgrimage—through Winchester, Salisbury, Glastonbury, Exeter, Wells, Hereford—tombs of old bishops and archbishops, lying on their backs with folded hands, waiting a blessed resurrection, and in the cathedral closes canons in their canonical garb looking like the devil for the glory of God; and they made a new diocese of Winchester, and consecrated a new cathedral in Liverpool.

Saint Antoine, qui retrouvez les choses perdues, priez pour nous.

I went into the crypt of the Pantheon; and saw in the cool tomb Jean Jacques Rousseau (they were not waiting for a blessed resurrection), and Voltaire, and Zola, and Berthelot, and President Carnot—and the varnished wreaths and ribbons were fresher on their tombs—I came out in the square and saw Voltaire wink at Rousseau——

Saint Antoine, qui retrouvez les choses perdues, priez pour nous.

Then I stood under the Arc de Triomphe, beside the grave of the unknown soldier, and women in black garments, and men in blue-grey stood silent, and bowed heads, and the flame flapped in the blue air—and flowers lay there—and we turned away and water streamed down our faces—*O patrie*—with—memory—glory.

Saint Antoine, qui retrouvez les choses perdues, priez pour nous.

On the French liner which carried him back to New York he made further observations on that quality of joy in life which was endlessly tantalizing his imagination by its precious elusiveness. Under the heading *La Gaulois[e]*—he describes the following scene one evening in the saloon:

"I sat in corner, my nose in book, smoking vile French tobacco, which neither looks, tastes, nor smells like anything but musty hay—brimming with gratitude for *La Gaulois[e]* . . . a Frenchwoman, one of a party of six, two or three Frenchmen, two or three ladies. She was moderately well featured, suave voiced, talked fluently, clean precision of consonants, soft vowels, and little gurgling, warbling sounds of liquids—song.

"But the effect was her face, over which passed wave after wave of *joie* and life; she was feeling pleasure with such abundance and richness that it overflowed, rayed, rippled, washed over all of us at that end of the room. The men sat around like children with their feet in the foam—and wave after wave of it rushed up—with a look of surprised felicity. The young clean-faced officer with gold stripe on his sleeves came in and they made a place, and she seized his hand and read his palm. All that I caught was *misère*—ripples of laughter, all their pleasure she caught up in her eyes."

From this scene there followed a stream of reflections on the mystic power of beauty in life.

"What is it that sets the altar ablaze?—Stirring of the senses?—When the miracle takes place—the wine becomes the blood and the bread the body of Christ—Till then we are materialists, sensualists—we are feeding.—This desire for *sacramental* relations with earth is what animated my rector at Tintagel—not mere pleasure of the senses, but a central vision, and transfiguration of the mind.—'Shattering prelude to rest and appeasement.' (One thing clear about the psychology of sacraments and all mystical discipline is that elimination, purification, is part of the process—you can't rise till you have thrown over your sand ballast.)—To make our joy come alive, to bring it out of the stone."

"The principal function of the critic (as student, as analyst, as explorer of American life) at the present time, is to discover the secret of felicity which seems appointed for it, which it craves, for which it seems to possess all the needful materials, which seems somehow to evade it. (This comes as a 'vision' from the soft air of the Gulf Stream and sunlight on blue water crested with white foam.) . . . Here indeed is the clue, is it not? that in the stuff of life itself there should ever mix a little wisp of beauty, something of grace and loveliness—a butterfly alighting on a bale of cotton makes the whole thing beautiful —a ray of sunlight on a cobwebbed keg of rusty nails turns them to ingots.—(The butterfly doesn't matter—the cotton doesn't matter). The mistake of the æsthete to think that the butterfly by itself would be more beautiful; or that one would bathe in sunbeams—blinded with excess of light; or that one would enjoy a mountain top more if one didn't climb to the

top. . . . (Don't try to disengage your beauty and make it pure.) Beauty is an active principle at work, weaving relations, playing over the surface, making contacts, allusions, connections, light—momentary as a dream . . . . Beauty is motion, life—not resident but mobile, nomad. . . . She is there by your pillow in the morning, and she is gone; the hope of seeing her again at eventide sweetens the dusty progress of the caravan."

These reflections issue in a resolve:

"I am going to write, so far as possible, for the rest of my life, about happiness, and where it is, and how it got there; and every paragraph that I write shall have the word, or the record of happiness in it—as some of the old saints wished to have the word God or Jesus, 'blessed name'—blossom on every page.—This I went out into the wilderness and dwelt forty years to learn. I am going to tell where I found her, and why she did not stay."

Thinking of "*La Gauloise*" a few days later, there occurs to him a comparison with American womanhood:

"Our American society is not arrogantly male. It is terribly womaned. It strikes all foreign observers as a strongly female society.

"But 'my God, Archer, what women.'—What notions of women. They have no ideals for themselves beyond such as are presented by an obsolescent Methodist God. I have spoken before a club of our modern women; admired them as debaters: they were *solid women*, heavy, well built women, stood squarely on their feet, debated as well, quite as well as any dozen aldermen of the city. But *mon dieu*, we have enough aldermen already!!!!

"Compare the superiority of a society which in one place and another plays on the imaginations of women with some other ideals—the Lady Chapel, St. Geneviève, La Chantare, Bretagne, St. Thérèse, St. Anne, St. Joan—in English Church she has been admitted.—I dropped a coin in every chapel in England or France where she was worshipped—and so too did that 'Nietzschean' G. B. Shaw,—by the same token not a Nietzschean. (Cf. Sir Thos. Browne.)

"You feel the superior affluence, richness, sweetness of the French woman—cultivated French woman. She was the supe-

rior of all the men who sat around her—officers, grey-haired men, etc., young ones. This woman of 30."

A Lady Chapel, he reflects, is a necessity in a society in which women drink three cocktails before dinner, smoke cigarettes, wear breeches, and put their feet on the table.

Shortly after he writes, "How one's gratitude grows toward people and things which are and make themselves lovely and beautiful," following this with a series of *Reconnaissances—Gratitudes:*

"I am grateful to that woman who told me that she takes a bath in lavender water. . . . Why did she tell me that? Pathos of desire to be thought sweet to the skin. (At first I didn't see that.)

. . . . . .

"I am grateful to the woman harpist from Indiana, going home for three weeks, who carries her gowns of silver and blue, and wears them at dinner and in the salons—among strangers. First I said, like a cynic, 'Still longing to be seen, though by the devil himself'—that was Puritan spleen.

. . . . . .

"Then my son said to me: 'No, you are mistaken; if she were all alone in her cabin, she would put that dress on—to be beautiful to herself.'—Charity, understanding. I am grateful to the young man who corrected me.

. . . . . .

"There is nothing more precious to have than a desire to be beautiful.

. . . . . .

"I am grateful to the radio-operator—clean, alert young Frenchman who speaks excellent English; coming down the stairway, meets a petty officer, takes his hand, and holds it while they talk.—Delicious courtesy, delicious amenity.

. . . . . .

"And I am grateful for knowledge that this is common, and not exceptional; for on the *quai* at Havre I saw men, busy about the dispatch of many boats, come up and lift their hats to one

another; and I saw men in overalls running around the harbor in launches, carrying directions to the *Titan* and *Taureau*, clambering up the sides of the dinky little launches, shake hands in climbing in.

. . . . . .

"And I recall the American express agent in my own home town, coming into an office full of university professors with his hat on—Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité—and saying, 'which of you fellows is Greenough?'

. . . . . .

"When the tide comes in—gratitude is a river which runs up inland and bathes with freshness and new beauty the stagnant channel—floats the dull boats that lie in the stinking mud-flats of the soul, and my thoughts spread sail and go proudly out to sea.

"Watch for the tides, O my soul!"

Most of Sherman's thinking while he was in Paris was centered in the plans for his literary review, which was now within a month of its inauguration. His brain was busy formulating the objects of criticism in relation to the audience of a metropolitan newspaper with a large circulation. The existing weekly reviews did not supply useful models for imitation. In England there was the "Literary Supplement" of *The Times*, addressing itself to an expert and critical public and subordinating creative literature to works of pure scholarship. The only American approximation to a popular review with critical standards—Dr. Canby's supplement to the New York Evening *Post*—had just perished. It is interesting to recall in this connection that Sherman early in 1920 received a letter from Mr. Donald Scott outlining the principles of the *Post's* projected review and soliciting his advice about it. The object of the *Post*, Mr. Scott explained, was "to create a great organ of critical opinion having a well-deserved reputation for scholarship and authority on the one hand, and a wide circulation because of its intensely interesting contents on the other hand." The editor of such a review, he added, should have "the ability to develop among our scholars and others a corps of contributing reviewers. He should see in the latest important work on

archæology a scholarly critical review by one of the leading authorities on this subject, who can bring out as well some of the more interesting high lights for the laymen. The old *Nation* had a high reputation, but its reviews were written by scholars for scholars instead of as we feel they should be—by scholars for scholars and the average man of intelligence."[3]

This is a good statement of part of Sherman's aim in his own review, but he was concerned also with defining the character of his critical attitude and with distinguishing his position from that of other critics. This in turn involved a definition of his social philosophy. He asks himself, to begin with, what is the virtue that makes a critic live, and surveys the qualities of the great critics in answering the question.

"1) By the capacity for communicating literary joy—e.g., Hazlitt—Pater—Swinburne—Lemaître—A. France—Purple passages.

"2) By the weight of his obiter dicta—wisdom—Johnson, Arnold, Coleridge, Emerson, Thoreau, etc.

"3) By his scholarship and breadth of outlook—Brandes, Saintsbury—(Babbitt).

"4) By his discrimination—Brownell, Sainte-Beuve, Pater, etc.

"5) By his wit, paradox, shocking epigram—stimulation—Shaw, Butler, G. K. C.—Wilde, Rémy de Gourmont, Gide—(Lamb).

"6) By his acquaintance with human nature. Where is Beauty in this account? Style?

"7) By his critical system and method—few—*Taine—Ribot—Croce.*

"8) By the humanity of his *ideal*—"

He draws up a list of American critics, chiefly the living, and makes an anatomy of Professor Babbitt's system, stating its merits and its defects, with an implication of the significance of these qualities for his own program.

L'École

Babbitt: Frein Vital: *he draws it large—he is stringent*, he is pessimistic—he does make his points again and again and with a thousand illustrations about man's need of discipline, con-

[3]February 4, 1920.

trol, and *virile opposition to the seductions of Nature.* Magnificent store house of illustration. And now it needs someone to tell the laity what it is all about.—More, he is in process of erecting a positive philosophy based on the experience of men everywhere and in all times.

Defect: air of universal condemnation; distaste given to whole work of man because he had a weak chin; worship of will—caricature of man with Roman nose and Napoleonic chin; lack of nuance; lack of appreciation for finer, gentler virtues—doesn't know what to do with women; forget not thy whip; suspicion of people; dogmatic rather than persuasive representation of his intuitions; lack of grace and charm—excess of ammunition—In print he does not well convey to the people the sense of weight, power, cogency which his personal solidity merits.—He antagonizes—(Lady who wanted to stick him full of pins—He ought to be as full of arrows as Saint Sebastian; but they don't shoot at him.) (Historical method—little uses.)

Ideas:

Ethical work.

Ethical and Arcadian imagination . . . antagonizes because he objects to so many delicious things—revery—nature—(gradually makes a place for recreation in his scheme).

If there is a feeling of restriction in the system of Professor Babbitt, there is an even greater sense of inadequacy in those who, at the other end of the scale, make the artistic mood the exclusive basis of literary judgment, their attitude suggesting reflections like the following:

"Croce not the first who has trusted artistic intuitions. *Rodin —Whitman.*

"O. Wilde—Experience for its own sake—that beauty and ugliness and sin and virtue all dissolve into experience—more or less intense—colored.

"St. Francis—love for his brother the fire—till it was on the point of burning him up.

"Nero—*qualis artifex pereo*—and his brother had . . . *God* in the glow of creation looked on the world and saw that it was good—But, afterward, he lapsed into a critical mood and repented him that he made the earth. And afterward he sent

some to hell; and some to heaven. Judgment is one of the four ends of man.

"Relation between Xianity and artistic mood—*Taste as a substitute for principles.*"

In other passages it is the kindred ideal of expression that undergoes examination. One may express miasma, spleen, contempt, disgust, ennui, and the like. Or, taking the better view of expression:

"Expression, generally speaking, makes people happy: nothing else makes people so happy.—(Expression means becoming what you are.)

"Maximum of happiness—maximum of expression.

"But the thing is not easy—inadequate, or unlovely, or gauche, fumbling expression makes people more unhappy than silence—so that many singers, musicians, artists lapse into silence rather than utter such garbled versions of their vision and experience as their technique can produce.

"Expression is impossible except through mastery of means.

"Expression of one thing at cost of all others, makes you a caricature of a man, a man in a spleen—a deadly sin—a pariah —a monster—a humorous character, in the old sense—an *avare, misanthrope*—

"And so on the theory of maximum of expression we are brought back to a vital governing control; which holds the powers in leash—and gets them to trot together."

This seems to lead back to the truth in Professor Babbitt's criticism, which is further emphasized by another note: "You can't apply the astringent pressure except from within—*frein vital;* as the power which drives the engine also applies the brake. Suppose you give yourself some pains to popularize the ideas of Babbitt, More, Brownell, Santayana & Co., Mather." The needful corrective to this is to regard criticism as something "which loves life and seeks to help it toward a lovelier expression of itself."

The kind of adjustment which Sherman was working for is even more forcibly illustrated in two other entries. One is a "List of People to whom one has probably done injustice in speech or in thought, *i.e.*, has been inadequately responsive"—a list which includes the names of Dewey, Veblen, Lewisohn,

Croce, Spingarn, Santayana, Mather, Van Dyke, Mencken, Carl Van Doren, and Villard. The other is his answer to those who had expressed a hope that he would "knock the heads of the radicals together." To them he said: "No, *I am a conservative of the future*. The liberals are the best crowd to be with at present in America. Arnold said he wasn't quite ready for Liberalism yet; well, I am not ready for Conservatism yet." Perhaps, he suggested, a position was possible which regarded Radicals, Liberals and Conservatives as units of a diversified regiment, with each deputed to a diverse task, rather than embodying mutually destructive forces. The same thought might be applied to institutions, and "instead of attacking universities, churches, agencies of structural power (as H. L. M. does), [one might] endeavor to find the powers of growth and life in each, and use it, magnify it, praise it, bring it into prominence.—Each one of these units is a receptacle or vessel of some power or virtue." In view of all this Sherman might well say, "Criticism is a complex affair for one who has not a one-track mind."

As far as the literary review was concerned, the two factors which governed Sherman's conception of it, were, on the one hand, the needs and desires of the public, on the other, the responsibility of the editor and critic. He was applying essentially the principles which determined his teaching in the university, with only a change in the medium. The question with him, naturally, was not "What does the public avowedly demand?" but "What latent powers of appreciation does it possess which a gifted and high-minded critic can help it to realize?" In his notebook he states and restates the problem in a variety of forms and with many modifications and allowances. The key sentence of his review, curiously adapting from Croce a phrase whose inadequacy as a critical formula he exposes in his first essay in "Books," is that it should, in theory, be a serene narration of what has happened in literature in all large departments of the national life, because the whole of the national life gets its reflection somewhere in literature, or it should. "I conceive of literature," he says, "as a partner of politics, religion, and morals, and potentially the most effective partner (of all branches, that of the critic is explicitly so)," and he adds, "I have never been able to follow those who wished to eman-

cipate literature from social responsibility . . . . I wish to make literature more important to the average man than it is now, because the average man is lonely; he has more thoughts than he can communicate, he is full of faculties which fust in him unused." "As I begin my connection with this newspaper," he says on another page, "I feel a desire that this review shall be of use. My main æsthetic conviction is that responsibility is good for artists, as well as for architects, and that our literature and criticism has suffered from lack of architectural intention." The analogy of his rôle with that of the architect he elaborated in the following entry:

Architect

I should like to be an architect: I am afraid that I am going to be a Congressman; and the public expectation is that I shall be a preacher; and I hope I shall be nothing worse.

What takes me in the architect's profession is that he is going to be of use to the republic, to many people; to be of use in ways that they understand; in ways in which they may legitimately seek satisfaction—in working out the rights which they have by nature, by law, by the happy accident of their birth in the beautiful valleys, hills, by winding rivers, of their own land.

The special opportunity of the architect is that he is occupied with design; he uses all the arts. He is occupied with form, with abstract needs and desires, with holding them in his hands together till they fuse and become harmonious and reconciled and out of them a shape arises—a new beauty; rooted in the ground, reaching towards the skies.

He is close to his materials—color, stuff, form.

Of the classes of architects, city-planning seems the noblest of all because it includes all the others that have yet been devised. No one has yet been employed to work out the relations of the city to the town; but under influence of mobility and connections, the villages are all part of one national park system (place for children; for old people; for quiet people; for athletic people; for talk; for horses, pedestrians, for cyclists).

Till the whole nation becomes a city-state, like the old Greek states, *civitas*—civilized.

The responsibility of the editor-critic is not to the public alone. The claims of the author on the one hand and of the

publisher on the other also need to be taken into account. The critic, he remarks, has three masters—the public, the publisher, the author: which shall he serve? In a responsible review the authors should be treated like the important people that they are, and publishers should be looked upon as more than business men. But how far is the desire to serve these masters compatible with a disinterested and independent criticism? It is possible to assure freedom from spite, malevolence, ignorance, and cliques, but disinterestedness in the sense of emancipation from all preconceptions is hardly an ideal productive of valuable criticism. This is the point developed by Sherman for his first article in "Books." He also sketched an outline for an alternative article stating the relation of the editor to each of the groups with which he was concerned.

My Masters—

Independent?—disinterested?—free from log-rolling? No; no more than one can jump out of one's skin.

1) It is not to serve as a publisher's organ—help them move the season's crop of new books?

2) It is not to discover a new masterpiece every week—good heaven, yes, once a week—

These two corners of the triangle are terribly interested.—

3) The public—tell me, in your judgment, what are the books which are worth our acquaintance—that is what the publishers wish to know; that is really what the authors wish to know also.

Shall the critic be then merely an "honest broker?"—salesman?—Sell the public to the authors as well as the authors to the public?

4) To establish *credit* all the way around—here the author can be sure of a report on his goods; the publisher an announcement; the public shall have our best effort to understand him; his needs; to interpret him to the authors and to the publisher. . . .

Cyrano wooing the public for the authors and more or less in love with her himself.[4]

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[4]Sherman figures artist, critic, and public as forming "the eternal triangle." The artist is the lover, the public is the girl, and the critic is the villain with the long nose, labeling the artist's book for the benefit of the public, wooing the public for the artist and then trying to get her away from him.

Besides the ordinary conditions of a literary review, Sherman faced the problems presented by the size of his audience. From the point of view of numbers the situation offered an opportunity such as should have been welcome to a teacher of democracy. The writer, Sherman affirmed, was "a priest expounding the scriptures to the multitude." About the desirableness of enlarging the public for good books and of making the public more critical there could have been no doubt in his mind. "In the abstract," he declared, "everyone should be glad of a newspaper audience to listen to book talk." The doubt was as to the value of the talk one could hold with such an audience, since "it is only when talk approaches some closeness of debate that it has much savor for the virtuoso." The restrictions imposed were of an obvious nature. Delicacy and *nuance* had to be sacrificed:

"As you widen your audience, you omit your parentheses; you eliminate dependent clauses; you reduce subordination; you build in Mykenaean style; you reduce allusion; you erase shades; you don't soften lines; you remember you are advertising—a 'Poster' not an etching—Is it not possible to tell the 'whole truth' to a large audience? (You find your delight in *nuance*.)

"Fancy, getting up before 5000 people and reading Pater or H. James or George Meredith to them.—What arts succeed with people?"

It was clearly incumbent upon the critic in that case to discover the kind of art which was appropriate for large audiences. "Doesn't Indian sculpture and architecture," he asks, "suggest a model for one who wishes to deal with great audiences? —i.e., combination of elaborate detail with grandiose form; so that as the beholder approaches closer he is aware of ever more and more intricacies of design—to the 'laborious orient ivory' —Infinite patience.—Sophisticated art.

"Art of little peoples—tribesmen.

"The sculptors who made the saints, gargoyles, the angels about the spire of Sainte Chapelle may well have been asked by their friends why put so much effort into what no one can see—no one can much more than know that those figures are there—and one can at least fancy a pious stone mason of the Thirteenth Century replying—a stone mason who had some hope, when he

had mastered his Latin, of taking a place with the brotherhood —*ad majorem Dei Gloriam.*—Read *The Seven Lamps of Architecture.*"

However, it is not at all certain that the people always prefer a poster to an etching and are incapable of appreciating nuance. There is a fallacy in comparing a reading public with a hearing public. There are things which people have to enjoy together and things which they can enjoy alone.

"In some great square the kneeling thousands feel themselves in the presence. Throngs in the nave stand and look into the dramatic act—religious drama—procession—sacrifice—liturgical drama. But one by one, the people pray; each one on a separate pair of knees. Never forget that every crowd, mass, is composed of individuals—that is the sin against the Holy Ghost. *Étatisme*—Use them as individuals not as masses."

Was it not possible, even in a newspaper, to resist and counteract the forces which make for standardization in modern society? Criticism could make it an object to foster versatility, to help people to a qualitative analysis of themselves, to emphasize the richness and variety of human nature and prevent the stereotyping and standardizing processes. "This is the point at which 'progress' goes to the million—with something lost of handwork, and nicety of fit, and personality. . . . Criticism is here to find fault with the devices which are stereotyped and standardized."

There is, indeed, another way of regarding standardization, namely, as *fixing a process*, establishing a quality, and then bringing everything up to that. By standardization, in this sense, one can make a certain degree of excellence so common "that a yokel would blush to be ignorant of it"; one can "bring an enormous body of people up to the 'scratch' relatively, in droves, in herds. The aspect of standardization which will not bear taking hold of is that everyone should be held back to the mass." "Criticism's business is not merely to establish standards and popularize them, but also to keep a free place for those who are seriously seeking to improve them." The effective relationship is that of an army and its scouts. "There is the main-road; the main army must come up along that road, and it cannot come any farther. But up ahead there are scouts, pioneers, spies of new lands, looking for bigger grapes than ever

grew—and we make too little provision for them. . . . It ought not to be impossible to make a place in one's heart for both scouts and main army. . . . [The army] establishes the base. When the scouts have no base but have gone off into the wilderness by themselves they are liable to be eaten by [lions]." Or, changing the figure somewhat, "The army [of] emigrants march in the beaten track; they drive the wagons in the rut; they keep the cattle in line; they see to provender for man and beast; they keep grease in the hubs and tires on the wheels. Scouts hunt antelopes, examine rivers for fish, look out enemy, green pastures, camping places, water. No thoroughfare that way."

Alongside of these reflections one may place the following entry:

"I have always talked to other men of the use of the newspapers as a place which scholars and men of letters should use. They seemed to believe it no fit place for a scholar. They couldn't talk to that crowd. Impossible to use shades and personal edges in an auditorium of that size—We don't want soliloquy. Personality.—Megaphone at Stamford Bridge—jollying the American crowds—Mark Twain did it. A. France does it. Johnson did it. Now comes my chance to try it. Fix your mind on your chance."

There also came to trouble Sherman the thought of having to key himself up each week to some significant statement on the basis of the new books of the year. Sometimes he buoyed himself for this undertaking with a sentence from Shakespeare —"How many beauteous creatures are there here, how wondrous mankind is"—and spoke of a "certain amorous curiosity," the mood of a "*recherche du temps nouveau*," "the capacity to look on the season's books as if there had never been any before in the world." But it is evident that at times he felt an element of terror in the prospect.

"To get up year after year the same elementary gusto about the obviously good and great things becomes tedious. On the other hand the book sellers and publishers tend to judge a [critic] by his immediate results as helping them or hindering them from moving the season's crop of books. The *fault* rapidly *develops;* the *need develops* to discover a masterpiece *every month—Great God, at least once a week*—quotha cynically."

The solution that apparently commended itself in this situation was to employ a different scale for current books, or to look upon current books as an athletic game, "where the same excitement is got up over the current runner, fighter, javelin thrower, even if he doesn't break a world record." "What is our business as officials at this Olympic?—Fair play, cheer the race, fair decisions, good crowd, get up enthusiasm—cheer leaders." Sherman even notes some points in the popularizing technique of French critics, such as the interviews of M. Frédéric Lefèvre with men of letters, in which he asked them in what shape inspiration came, what writers they adhered to, what they thought of their contemporaries, and the like; and he drew up, half humorously, the sketch of an interview with an American novelist.

The following detached reflections and resolves throw further light on the mood and temper in which Sherman was approaching his new work:

"I wish to widen the meaning of moralist—student and master of *mores*."

"How aghast one becomes at the generalizations—of others.
"Every prudent man shuns generalizations—of others.
"When one considers the generalizations—of others, one is tempted to vow never to use one again."

"Whenever my writing seems good to me, I see the body of my thought as a visible form proceeding out of a trunk like branches of a tree, like fingers of a hand, like the wings of a palace—with disposable rooms and chambers."

"The best works of art are produced by those who write with natural facility and acquired difficulty. The American writers have the natural facility but lack the difficulty."

"I have got to make a rule: or I shall be a failure. So many hours for work: so many for talking with people. So many hours to read. So many for being 'nice' to my wife. So many for writing to my relatives. So many for performing such and such other duties of country. So many for getting each day a new idea."

CHAPTER XXXI

LITERARY EDITOR

ON SEPTEMBER 2nd Sherman landed in New York and bent his thoughts at once on the plans for the first issue of the literary review. For several weeks, while his own apartment was being made ready, he took up his quarters with the Van Dorens. He had to make a trip or two to Cambridge to see John registered and properly domiciled at Harvard. Writing to his mother at this time, he said, "You never had an only child leave you, did you? I hope you will be pleased at the thought of having seen two generations of your offspring at Harvard. The sentiment appeals to me; and perhaps decided us finally for Harvard instead of Columbia which is next door to Morningside, and in many ways would be cheaper and easier."[1] By the end of the month he was settled at 70 Morningside Drive in rooms which, for all the spaciousness of their outlook over the roofs and elevated trains of upper Manhattan, made him instantly familiar with the New Yorker's typical sense of cramp. The little cubicle which he called his study could not accommodate more than a fourth of his books, and the rest had to be disposed down the long dark corridor. He was soon convinced that he had grown too dependent upon elbow room to adapt himself happily to such an arrangement.

If Sherman had some serious misgivings and hesitations when he accepted his new post, he wisely forgot about them when the time came for assuming his tasks. He plunged into his work with the liveliest interest and found an excitement and a thrill in it which compensated him for the hard labor involved. "There is a passage in Wyatt," he wrote to Mr. Pattee, "which keeps recurring to me this fall:

> "'But I am here in Kent and Christendom,
> Among the Muses, where I read and rhyme.'

[1]September 19, 1924.

I find as a writer and not a pedagogue, one really doesn't require much but books and paper and peace. And as I hustle from one week to the next, I occasionally sigh for a sheltered nook in the hills. If I did not think it my duty to expose myself a bit to the lacerations of the world, I should probably sigh oftener. As it is I sigh very infrequently, for I'm having 'a good time,' and, I believe, learning a little something."[2] And in a letter to Mrs. Mabel Lee on the same day he says: "New business, new adventure, exciting, etc., etc., but very steady hard work! So engrossing that as yet I have hardly had time to go out and buy the postage stamps necessary for despatching letters, which aren't yet written." This sense of happy absorption in his activity he conveys a month later in a letter to John: "I'm slogging away pretty steadily; but to tell the honest truth, I've already had quite a bit of fun out of it. The *Tribune* people are a very jolly lot, and one sees so many people who are doing more or less interesting things—if one doesn't dodge them all, and one can't!—You'd better think twice before deciding *not* to go into journalism."[3] There were times, to be sure, when the strain and the worry grew so intense as to wrest from him a cry of warning: "The life of a person who lives by the pen is a daily hell, and purgatory—with only the faintest glimpses of a third place. There is 'simply nothing in it' unless you really relish a grinding effort 99% of the time. That is my opinion. Also the opinion of many *good* writers. I myself began too late. So that I probably know more of the effort than of the satisfaction of the pen. But even those who began living by ink at a fairly early age make copious confession of the torments which are the daily lot of the conscientious penman."[4] This, however, was written to dissuade from giving up a secure career a person who was not certain of her calling as a writer, and it reflects the mood of gloom over the serious illness of his son. And even this reference contains no hint of regret at having exchanged the university for journalism. To everyone who raised the question his invariable reply was that he would entertain the idea of returning to academic life after he had demon-

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[2]October 19, 1924.

[3]November 17, 1924.

[4]To Mrs. Mabel Lee, May 20, 1925.

strated his unfitness for the work he was doing. "It is a 'grind,'" he admitted, "but it is as close to what I wanted as I had the right to expect, rather closer."[5]

Mr. Ellery Sedgwick, after talking with Sherman in New York, remarked that he had never observed the gradual unfrocking of a professor performed with more decorum. Sherman himself liked to think that he was losing the stigmata. There was still his connection with the American Academy to keep him in mind of his past, but he continued to feel the same uneasiness about that association that he had intimated at his election. He rather anticipated that the Academy would look upon him as a "cursed Ganelon," much as Harvard had done, and to Mr. Brownell he confided a suspicion that it was a mistake to elect him into its membership. When he was called upon, during his first winter in New York, to give one of the four addresses in connection with the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Academy, he adopted a tone which was calculated to emphasize his detachment from the "academic" point of view. He said that he had studied the constitution of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in order to learn whether he was under any corporate obligation to speak as an antiquarian and commentator and had been greatly surprised and pleased to find that the National Institute avowed "no addiction to historical retrospect." The message that he delivered to his colleagues was that if they really had it at heart to advance letters they would have to renounce the antiquarian mind and accept the society of their contemporaries. Deeply imbued with the task he had himself undertaken, he challenged them to forego the safe and beaten way for the sake of exploring "the dark forest of human experience" and reporting their discoveries with a ruthless veracity, substituting a fact which they felt with all their senses for a vague word which they had heard in polite society. The age, he said, was "a great and fascinating period in the emotional and literary discovery of America, because the woods are full of lighted torches, full of men and women bent on exploring and reporting the truth as they see it, and nothing but the truth, and great areas of repressed truth about their own lives and about the lives of the

[5]To Mrs. Mabel Lee, June 3, 1925.

American people." And he added: "The America which we are now discovering is something of a shock to a good many people; but I think they will recover from it. Prudent persons may not like the present generation of explorers, their vocabulary, or their manners or their criticism of life; but then the chances are that they wouldn't have cared very much for the crews who sailed with Columbus or with Magellan. . . . Happily our purpose here is fulfilled and our pleasure is keenest when we are recognizing and applauding the various aspects of the great literary movement which is taking place under our eyes, giving us on the whole the stimulating sense that ours is one of the valorous and encouraging ages of the world." In conclusion he quoted the passage in which Sherwood Anderson describes how he forsook the pursuits of business to go forth in quest of his own soul, calling the action beautifully symbolic of what was happening in our civilization.[6] He afterward interested himself in getting writers like Mr. Sherwood Anderson and Joseph Hergesheimer elected into the Institute. It was not until his second year in New York (April 23, 1926) that he went for the first time to sit in one of the "sacred chairs." Before going in he stayed for fifteen minutes at the bottom of the street on the wall by Riverside Drive and reflected wistfully that from Broadway one comes down hill to the Academy and that the building looks right into the gray stones of a cemetery. He sat there watching some of his colleagues drive up in their cars and *hobble* in.

It was evidently not in association with the members of the Academy that he found his purest satisfaction. But he did derive a great deal of enjoyment from the sense of being in touch with the human scene. He found himself remarkably sensitive to the numerous stimuli of New York. The energetic throb of its life communicated itself to his own pulses. The men and women engaged eagerly in a definite, soul-absorbing pursuit, the intellectual hum of the city, the life of its artists as expressed in the theater and the picture galleries, the many notable causes affecting the weal and progress of mankind—all these

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[6] "The Emotional Discovery of America," in *Four Addresses in Commemoration of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Academy of Arts and Letters*, 1926 (Academy Publication No. 54). Also printed in *McNaught's Monthly*, March, April, 1925.

things took hold of his imagination, attuned as it was to the reception of impressions which streamed from the vital currents of existence. His previous aloofness from the great centers had left him with appetite unjaded by external sensations of this sort, nor did he have time in New York to indulge himself sufficiently to take the edge off his palate.

In one of the "New Letters to a Lady in the Country" there is a dialogue between the Gray Horse from the country and the Bay Horse from the city in which the latter sets forth the advantages of metropolitan existence as they appeared to Sherman:

"A hoss don't live by oats alone. A hoss gets in on things what broadens his intellecks. One week I pulls the lifeboat of the *Roosevelt* up the Avenue. Kindova kick in that. Last week I hauled Tintagel Castle over to the Opery house. This afternoon, waitin' for my fellers to hoist a pianner into a tenth story winder, two little gals all dolled up for confirmation in white veils and flowers comes up and rubs my nose. Gives a hoss somethin' to think of nights in the stall when he's so collar-galled he can't sleep."[7]

Sherman used the "Letters to a Lady" in large measure as a medium for describing the surface sensation of his life in New York. One finds among them the account of a drive into the country amid the gorgeous autumn foliage; comments on events of interest in the theater, such as *Hamlet* in modern clothes or the Theatre Guild's productions of *The Goat Song* and *The Great God Brown;* visits to exhibitions of the pictures of George Bellows or of modern French artists (his taste for painting seemed to undergo a marked heightening, and a picture exhibition was one of the few things for which he would gladly interrupt his work); a Christmas party at "Tom Hawkins'" or an afternoon tea with Mrs. Isabel Paterson; a public or semipublic function where interesting persons were gathered and where he enjoyed good talk with some notable, and, not least enjoyable, the private luncheons and dinners with individuals whose society roused and stimulated him.

This was perhaps the aspect of living in New York from which Sherman derived the greatest enjoyment. He had the

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[7] "Books," April 25, 1926.

chance not only to nourish friendships already begun but to form new ones as well. He early entered into pleasant relations with his neighbor, the President of Columbia University. When he was about to review the latter's book, *The Faith of a Liberal*, he wrote to him: "If you don't like what I say, you can very easily have me assassinated as I go to and from my work,"[8] to which President Butler replied, "You are not only safe from danger of assassination, as far as any malign agents of mine are concerned, but if I can influence Mayor Hylan to that end, you shall be escorted to and from your work by mounted police from this day forth."[9] Sometimes a review led to the beginning of a cordial personal relationship. This was the case with Miss Ellen Glasgow, with whose spirit, he said, he fell in love when he met her one evening at Mr. Van Vechten's before he had read her books, but with whom his real intimacy dated from the correspondence following his article on her *Barren Ground*. He wrote to her after receiving an acknowledgment of his appreciative essay:

"I am delighted that you are going at our silly sentimental public again! Don't let your 'fighting spirit' devour your charm! It's a silly public, but it has to be charmed. Somehow that radiancy and grace must be preserved along with the sincerity and fearlessness. The Victor must have it. Dorinda didn't quite lose it, but she became pretty grim—and the kind of *happiness* that she actually found isn't quite adequately *communicated* at the end. Now you, if you will let me say so, seem to brim with a certain sort of happiness. Let us have it—under tension; it is the best thing you have, or anyone has; and one should always give one's best—it is needless to say to you, who have done it so steadily."[10] Another letter, a month later, testifies to the rapid growth of this friendship, for it was not Sherman's habit to write in terms of such affection to persons whom he had known scarcely two months.

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[8]December 24, 1924.
[9]January 5, 1925.
[10]April 23, 1925.

(*To Ellen Glasgow*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York City,
May 20, 1925.

DEAR ELLEN:

After all your blandishments and the elaborate cajolery of admitting me to the "best friend's" club, to salute me as Doctor is a little chilly, I think! People of our age can't afford to sit around twenty years hoping that at the end of that period they will be well enough acquainted to be good friends. They must heed Robt. Herrick's advice, and remember Marvell and the cold deserts of Eternity. I refuse, after last week, to be thrust back among the "dear doctors." If you don't respond, I shall write to your sister, who is your only rival in my affections of that beautiful week. I don't know her name, but she told me things about Williamsburg and the old presidents of William and Mary and visiting their college at Oxford which extended my attachment to the family two or three hundred years backward.—By the way, have you anywhere in your works *done* the influence of that sort of tradition in American society?

When you were speaking of my little notice of Mrs. Wharton, why didn't you tell me what you think of *that sort of novel?* Of course we understood its obvious limitations. But doesn't our literature need—particularly our prose fiction—need more examples of the austerely finished work of art? I should like to have your feeling as a novelist about that particular sort of endeavor. As a reviewer, I hope, if I continue in the trenches, to do a little something towards interesting the readers in the *form* of the novels which they devour.

Ruth and I wave our heartiest thanks for the autumnal suggestions. We should love to see you sometime in Richmond. I hope it may be possible. Meanwhile, having met you and knowing you are there has added an entire new territory to the substantial part of my imagination. I hope you will write again. I hope you will have a fine clear lucid season with your Ironical Novel, of which I think often.

With best wishes,
Sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

And the following September he breaks out once more against her "Doctoring" him and catches up her reference to the month in which they became acquainted: "What's this about 'a changeable month'—friendship begun in a changeable month? I imagine there is not much changing in the friendships around you, Ellen Glasgow, except as time strengthens them. And we're both of the continued story species."[11]

It was gratifying to feel himself in the midst of things, to realize that he was performing a part to be reckoned with among the active men of his world. At the least it gave him a means of making an impression upon his son, the one mortal being whom he found it most difficult to impress. "By the way," he appeals to him, "is this a sign of progress? I was asked to-day to write an article for *Vanity Fair* (and for *Scribner's*, and the *Golden Book*, and to give an address at Brown and get an honorary degree in June)."[12] The opportunities, however, for meeting people and doing things were so numerous and so tempting that it required real fortitude to draw the line against them. "I've never had so much cutting out to do in my life," he wrote to John, "as I have these last few months. If I accepted one fourth of the things I am asked to do, I'd have to drop 'Books' within a week. To-day for example I have declined an invitation to tea with Michael Arlen and an invitation to dinner with John Finley and Wickersham and probably Elihu Root. I'd like to go to both. But my job simply can't be done if I do."[13] The job was indeed at times so exacting as to preclude any kind of social diversion. We are near the bald truth of Sherman's life in New York in this sentence: "For the past week I have been, as pretty usual, incarcerated and *incommunicado*."[14]

The writing of the weekly article which was his main business on the literary review was generally an affair of about five days —three days for the preparatory reading and two days for the writing itself. A working day with Sherman was not measured, it should be remembered, by a union scale. It began between eight and nine o'clock and might continue till midnight

[11]September 4, 1925.

[12]March 2, 1925. He was, during his first year in New York, an advisory editor of the *Golden Book*.

[13]March 13, 1925.

[14]To John, June 15, 1925.

or beyond, with the briefest possible intervals for meals, and perhaps none at all for exercise. At first his routine was to begin his work on Monday and finish it on Friday. On that day he would have Mrs. Van Doren up in his apartment and read his article to her. He was concerned about the impression he might make on his new public, and she was his medium of communication with it. Since make-up day did not come till Wednesday this was a reasonably comfortable schedule, but it was not maintained for very long. Before the year was out the writing of his essay extended itself till Sunday. In the second year, when the make-up was advanced to Monday, it meant that he was working with the printer's devil at his very elbow. It was late Sunday afternoon by the time the week's article had been read to Mrs. Sherman or Miss Busey (who was then doing his typing) and properly revised, and so anxious was he to go on polishing indefinitely—"putting the edge on," he called it—that Mrs. Sherman had difficulty in getting him out for a walk. He did not like walking without an objective, and often, after going a little way, he would rebel, call a taxi, and return.

With Monday given over to the office and composing room there remained only Tuesday as, theoretically, a free day for social engagements or diversions. But there is no evidence that either his Mondays or Tuesdays were uninvaded by his writing task. What Sainte-Beuve said of his own labors, Sherman might truly have said of his: "I never get a day off. About midday on Monday I lift up my head and breathe for about an hour. Then the door shuts again, and I'm in prison for a week." His grind was unremitting. If, under favoring circumstances, he completed the writing of an article in a single day, the "breathing space" was spent in assiduously applying the file or it was promptly filled up with a rush of engagements for lectures or essays or the performance of some chore which conscience did not permit him to decline.

Sherman, indeed, started out bravely to do two articles a week, drawing for the second on the accumulation of his notebooks or on the fleeting impressions of his experience in the city. But this, he soon realized, was too severe an undertaking. "It looks pretty *thick* and pretty *regular* to turn two or three thousand words every week in a paper like ours," he wrote early in October to Mr. Sedgwick, and when asked to review

a novel for the *Atlantic Monthly* his answer was, "I wish I might even find time to read it. But I am attached to a wheel, which obliges me to produce two articles a week. This occupies *all my time*."[15] Even after the second article was made a bi-weekly instead of a weekly requirement, the relief was not appreciable. As a matter of fact the strain under which he was writing seemed to increase with the passing weeks, probably because of the sustained physical effort, as appears from his reply to Mr. Sedgwick's urgent request for a contribution:

"I have been 'inching' along from week to week in the pale expectation that presently I might be able to write you in hopeful vein about an article for this spring. But spring is already at the door; my pace at my weekly duties doesn't mend; and I may as well say now as two months hence that I see no possibility of writing outside the stern path of duty before midsummer. I'm sorry: but as I have so often quoted: 'I have come to the ring and now I must hop.'"[16]

There is complete illumination as to the state of body and mind in which Sherman was producing his essays in his letters to John. On March 13th he reports that he is doing Wells for a week from the following Sunday "with an announcement in next Sunday's paper and nothing written yet. That always gives me a kind of chill. Suppose one couldn't put it across!" Two days later he is beginning to write on Wells and "horribly afraid it is going to be bad." On May 3rd, Sunday, he is at home all day finishing up Oscar Wilde "and pretty good, too, by George, thank you," and the next day and the day after he is reading Mrs. Wharton and cudgeling his brains to beat himself through *The Mother's Recompense*. On May 17th he announces that in two days he has written an article on Francis Hackett and a Letter to the Lady, and read three Harper's Prize novels to boot. On June 5th he adopts a plaintive tone: "Your mother has kept me at home for two days working, not even letting me out for dinner!—Reading D. H. Lawrence all day—a crazy man with marvelous faculty of conveying the Sense of Life." June 15th: "I girded up my loins and wrote *two* articles and a letter to Caroline last week—between 6000 and 7000 words."

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[15]November 4, 1924.

[16]February 16, 1925.

June 18th: "Your mother and I are going out to dinner to-night —'curses!'—as you would say. I, of course, want to stay at home and think out the Elisabethans. I wonder what you are doing this P. M. I'm sure you get more variety and interest into the P. M.'s than I do. Suspect you are bored with having me recite: 'Writing another article.' But believe me, child, you aren't worse troubled than I am—at my having nothing else on my mind. It can't be said that I have a highly versatile life to report. The variety is all internal—I have to get it from hopping from Brigham Young to France and then to Herodotus and Sallust; but the outsider doesn't find it enlivening." June 23rd: "I worked till one last night and four or five hours this A. M. finishing my Evolution article—which was my second piece last week. Now I am reading at Stewart Edward White."

His actual editorial duties, except in the emergency created by the illness of Mrs. Van Doren, never became any heavier than he expected them to be. He conferred with Mrs. Van Doren on matters of policy and left the execution almost wholly in her hands. He liked to foster independence in the responsible members of his staff. When the editor of the children's page, Miss Anne Carroll Moore, complained of certain pictorial misadventures in the make-up of some of the early issues, he promptly wrote back: "Never forget that you are the captain of a page and whatever happens it must always be *we* and not *they* who have done it. . . . You must come over and let Mrs. Van Doren show you the perils and wonders of the composing room."[17] Occasionally he would with his own pen solicit a review from a friend with whom a personal appeal would carry special weight, but in general that remained the business of his competent associate. On the day when the paper was made up he liked to be in the office, not so much because his counsel was needed in designing it or putting it through the press as because of his feeling of official responsibility. He took a certain amount of pride in contributing to the practical management of the paper, and his pleasure in it was greatly enhanced by the stimulus of the personalities alongside of whom he was working. He found great delight in the ready wit and virile vocabulary of Mrs. Isabel Paterson. He has left a description of it in one of

[17] "Books," Memorial Number, September 26, 1926.

the "New Letters to a Lady," speaking in the person of the fictitious "Paul":

"I. M. P. is a character. The first time I tried to sell them a sonnet at the 'Books' office I saw a rather petite person in bobbed black hair, black dress with white collar and sailor tie, and red stockings—the same color as Ellen Glasgow's—bending over the telephone. She was facing me with steel-grey eyes, sharp, penetrating, vital. I thought she looked a bit austere. She was addressing the telephone in a most pained and pointed manner. She was saying: 'Why in God's name don't you give me the number I asked for?'

"Several times since then I have dropped in to help them read proof. In this way I became acquainted with I. M. P.'s journalistic 'mask.' My first impression was that she had a mind like Samuel Johnson's. Her reading is immense. You can mention no subject on which she hasn't detailed information at instant command—all current literature, as a matter of course, Russian fiction, Spanish history, Buddhism, early English chronicles, geography, ethics, psychology, roughing it—what you please. She has never been in France, but the map of Paris lies in her mind as plain as Manhattan Island; and I remember one day hearing her tell a young traveler how to get from one point to another in the Latin Quarter. As a consequence of this hideous erudition she never asks a question. She is always the source of information. Her opinions, like Johnson's, are as definite as her knowledge. She professes skepticism and is as dogmatic as a bishop. When you first meet her she knocks you down repeatedly—till she has thoroughly commanded your respect!

"The thing which makes you put up with this manhandling is that she is an incessant, spontaneous wit, again like Johnson, and her average talk would bear preservation in a Boswellian record. Last week I wandered into the White Horse Tavern for a lonely luncheon, and found the 'Books' staff just ordering theirs. They asked me to join them. I. M. P. ordered a vegetarian lunch and a double ration of butter. Presently I remarked: 'I think that waiter comes from Alsace.' 'At each trip,' snaps I. M. P. In literary matters she is conservative; that is, she likes good writing. We fell into a discussion of the strange forms of sin which are appearing in recent literature. When we

had alluded to several forms of fashionable wickedness, 'I am so much a Tory,' says I. M. P. very gravely, 'that I wonder no one says a word for the old-fashioned adultery which was *good enough* for our fathers and mothers."[18]

Sherman's own part in these conversational exchanges is suggested by Mrs. Paterson's reminiscent description: "Pompous formality bored him; he grew cramped when hoisted on a pedestal. When he seemed reserved, he was merely a little weary of the rôle of an 'important person,' which he could not, on occasions, speak from. In his personal contacts he was extraordinarily gentle, receptive; his wit was playful and amiable, and he enjoyed opposition in opinions, as adding to the pleasure of conversation."[19] Elsewhere she speaks of how cordial he was to all gayety, how "undemanding" in his friendships, how shy about asserting his authority, how prone to turn his humor upon himself, as when he remarked reflectively "that he had come to the conclusion that he ought to give more time to enjoyment, to the avowed pleasures of life, and he added, with a not quite suppressed smile: 'I would, you know, approach amusement in that way, as a duty.'" His presence at the office, she says, "made the hardest and longest day of the week, the day when 'Books' goes to the press, take on the aspect of a cheerful social occasion. For in addition to all his other gifts, he had the fine talent of being able to give graciously."[20]

In his relations with his associate editor there was something more than cordial harmony. He not only relied on her completely but deferred to her as to the guiding and controlling spirit of the machine. Far from displaying authority, he always acted rather as the grateful recipient of favors, repaying her efforts with an intensity of appreciation which must have been an incentive to put forth one's power to the utmost. He was, however, not helpless in a crisis, as he took some satisfaction in pointing out to her when she took a brief holiday. "Dear Editor," he addresses her, "Well, 8:20 Wednesday night. I. M. P. and I have lunched and supped, and I am sitting in the office waiting for the revise! Everything as 'per schedule.' They cut us to twelve pages, of which, with Bill, I conducted the make-up

[18] "Books," March 28, 1926.

[19] *McNaught's Monthly*, May, 1927, Vol. VII, p. 153.

[20] "Turns with a Bookworm," "Books," September 5, 1926.

of five. Jimmie took a holiday. You should have seen the diabolical courage of my cuts; but more especially my composition at the pistol's point of four extra lines. The boys of course all missed you gravely. Did you see the paragraph in the Jan. *Bookman* by Llewellyn Jones? He credits you with the make-up on the ground that I am too much of a gentleman to deal with the force in the composing room."[21] Nothing could well exceed the gallantry of the tribute which he offered to his collaborator at the end of the first stage in their partnership.

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

Dorset, Vermont,
July 4, 1925.

DEAR IRITA:

This morning, listening to the soft rain falling on this incomparable circle of green mountains, suddenly I saw the whole of this last year all in one piece, and I thought this: that never anyone who had undertaken a long task, difficult and full of unknown things, had ever before perhaps in the history of the world been so fortunate as I in finding at the outset a companion in the undertaking, ready to admit him as an equal yet in all respects so superior: so wise, so generous, so sympathetic, so independent, so invariably and unfailingly equal to every occasion, so unerringly right, so unfalteringly holding herself at concert pitch of achievement, so steadily genial and easy and reassuring with associates, so resourceful, prescient, original, clear-sighted, swift, tenacious, and firm, so full of courage, and hope, and kindness, and joy, so richly justifying all faith, so creative of faith in others, so completely the reward of faithful subjects and servants, so ample a reason for effort and continuance and improvement, so adequate a motive for finding labor pleasant and the effort worth while. If you wish to know, Irita, how I really feel about this last year, this is the way I feel. I hope you are beginning to drink deep draughts of rest and refreshment. I hope you are all well and wonderfully happy. Love to you all.

STUART.

[21] December 24, 1924.

For all his apparent shifting of the burden, however, Sherman was not free from the anxiety of trying to make his paper a success, beyond what he contributed to it by his own writing. The general composition of its contents, the character of the reviews, and the quality of their writing were objects of unceasing interest to him. He constantly refers to them in his letters to John, saying on one occasion, "You must excuse me if I run on about these things. They push at me steadily."[22] Again he writes: "I hope you will find time to read quite a bit of this week's 'Books.' The list of our reviewers seems to me rather 'dazzling.' And what is more, most of them have written mighty well, which can't always be said for a fine list of names."[23] It was his ambition to make the review distinguished among its rivals by the comprehensiveness of its view of literature and the expertness of its comment. An insinuation that he was wasting his energy in merely sponsoring one more literary weekly of the kind with which New York was familiar was likely to bring from him an expression of marked displeasure, ranging from what one correspondent characterized as a "perfectly justified fury of protest" to such rather mild deprecation as this: "I'm also sorry you find 'Books' so much like the other two! All our *friends* here tell us it is so different and so much better. But that is the way with friends."[24]

His chief responsibility, of course, was for what came from his own pen. In that respect Sherman's distinction was unquestioned. One does not feel that there was any extravagance when Mr. Geoffrey Parsons exclaimed to Mr. Julian Mason: "We are printing to-day in Mr. Stuart Sherman's stuff the best stuff that has ever been printed in any New York newspaper." This was a view expressed by many others, whose critical vision was not dimmed by association on the same paper. Mr. Spingarn wrote in appreciation of the ever widening grasp and range of his interests, adding, "I follow your weekly utterances with an interest I seldom give to other criticism." If there is any significance in the tributes of authors whose books have been reviewed, it is doubtful whether a more impressive array of testimonials was ever collected by a practising

[22]April 23, 1926.

[23]May 9, 1926.

[24]To A. Francis Trams, January 4, 1925.

critic in so short a time. They came generally from writers with whose outlook Sherman was supposed not to be in sympathy and yet they repeatedly testified that the critic had penetrated to the very heart of their work. They came from writers of the conservative wing, and the radical wing, from writers firmly established and writers relatively unknown, from such as had always been friendly and such as had been mainly hostile. At the risk of making the page look like a publisher's circular, some of these acknowledgments must be quoted. Their significance often lies in the persons from whom they emanate, and they serve to give an idea of the impression that was made by Sherman's "leaders" on the creators of current literature. There are several undated notes from Sherwood Anderson: "Your opinion means much to me. Hope you liked *Dark Laughter*—sometimes anyway. . . . I feel very humble and small after reading your thing in the *Herald Tribune*. When I saw you—once—I had a feeling you should know what I am driving at—anyway—more than any other critic I had seen. It was in the shape of your head, your eyes, your shoulders. God knows I thank you for writing so fine a thing. It's incidental that it happens to be about my work. . . . You have no idea of your strength in the outlying country. Really you are making me respectable." Mr. Francis Hackett, after the review of *That Nice Young Couple*, wrote: "I am delighted with the magnanimity of your review of my book. I like its irony, which is fair, and its amusement, which is generous. It has, in fact, moved me very much. . . . Your criticism is a good sign that the real Republic still flourishes."[25] Miss Ellen Glasgow said: "Your article in 'Books' to-day has not only given me more pleasure than anything that has been written about me in the past, it has infused spirit and strength into my will and made me feel that the struggle is worth while after all. Yesterday in a mood of discouragement I told myself that I could not begin another book. To-day, after reading what you have written of me, I feel the urge of a new idea unfolding in my mind. I would rather have this understanding praise from you than from anyone else who is now writing in America."[26] Mr. D. H. Lawrence observed that he liked to know what Sherman said "because you do care about the deeper

[25]June 18, 1925.

[26]April 20, 1925.

implication of a novel"[27]; and similarly Mr. Louis Bromfield: "You see far more than is comfortable, for you managed to see one by one the faults which have tormented me."

Sherman's "clairvoyance" is the attribute more often dwelt upon than any other by appreciative subjects of his criticism. "I am going to tell you frankly," writes Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe, "that I value your critical opinion more than any other in America [that phrase becomes a common refrain in these letters]. . . . You have found many of the things I hoped—without much confidence—that somebody would find."[28] There are similar acknowledgments from Albert Bigelow Paine, Llewellyn Powys, Mark Sullivan, and Irwin Edman. "Once long ago," writes Mr. Edman, "I thought breaking into the *Atlantic* was the climax of literary achievement in America, but for the last year and a half I have been convinced that the real thing in that line was to be given the serious attention of Stuart Sherman. . . . Of course you divined, as you always do, the exact essence of what I intended, and you detected also and infallibly my limitations. In general you said exactly what I should have wished to believe about the qualities and interests of my own mind. The part of the book you liked was the part I was sincerely interested in. . . . Your review has stimulated me more and taught me more about how to go about that enterprise [of connecting contemporary philosophy and contemporary character] than any of the forty I have seen to date."[29]

Even avowed followers of Mr. Mencken joined the chorus of acclaim, though it took some of them a little while to become aware that they had been guilelessly following a false scent. It was with evident surprise that "Paul Pry" of the New York *World* communicated his discovery. "Henry Louis Mencken," he said, "had better take another look at Stuart Pratt Sherman and write some 'New Epistles for Old.' I think the erstwhile professor deserves it. Either he never had any hayseeds in his hair or he has emerged with such éclat from his Mid-Western chrysalis that only the mud Mr. Mencken has hurled at him would identify him as that awful Professor Sherman. . . . Mr.

[27] July 11, 1925.

[28] December 7, 1924.

[29] June 1, 1926.

Sherman is accepting the age (if he never did before) and trying to understand and interpret it. The age should be grateful, rejoicing more in the one converted sinner than in the ninety-and nine faithful."[30] It would be easy to add to the volume of these tributes. Among them there is even "a nice, cooing letter" from Mr. George Moore, which makes piquant reading alongside of his rather severe sentence of judgment on Sherman's first book,[31] and a good-humored appreciation from Mr. Poultney Bigelow, whom Sherman had just treated with a large dose of his most devastating irony. "We laughed ourselves into hilarious forgiveness," wrote Mr. Bigelow, "as your well-balanced characterizations poured out of the *Tribune* Sunday morning—caustic yet wholesome reminders . . . and so thank you for your masterful yet kindly handling of those hasty pages of mine."[32]

It is not to be imagined, in view of all this, that Sherman received nothing but bouquets for his editorial and contributorial labors. There were disgruntled authors and irate readers. "Every now and then," he writes, "they send up to me from downstairs indignant letters from subscribers who want me fired. There was a very indignant one to that effect, for example, over the Powys article."[33] He tells also of "two six page letters from Los Angeles, complaining that my treatment of George Washington is unworthy of the D. A. R.—and in short downright disrespectful."[34] Sometimes he thought a reader's protest deserving of a serious answer, either by way

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[30]March 29, 1925.

[31]"Books," December 21, 1924, p. 12.

[32]January 18, 1926. In this letter Mr. Bigelow, indulging in a characteristic bit of spoof, boasted of having known Sherman for almost forty-five years. "It was in October of 1881," he wrote, "that I rode over the virgin prairies of Iowa—the grass over my horse's ears—and the marvels of wheat garnering and transportation were explained to me. And a mother boasted of the finest babe in the United States—and that must have referred to Anita's favorite son!" Sherman was sufficiently taken in by this revelation to inquire of his mother: "Do tell me whether you have any recollection of seeing Poultney Bigelow in Anita, where he says he was?—I'm thinking of printing a piece of his letter in my paper with this remark: 'Another and final proof of Poultney Bigelow's genius for being on the spot when anything of first rate importance was happening.'" January 19, 1926.

[33]To Jacob Zeitlin, 1925.

[34]To John, November 21, 1925.

of clearing up a misapprehension or reaffirming his position with greater positiveness. To Father Carey, who thought he saw a slur on the Catholic Church in the essay on Anatole France, Sherman sent a note of reassurance.

(*To Rev. William A. Carey, S. J.*)

Nov. 4, 1924.

Dear Mr. Carey:

No, of course there were no sneers at the church in that article on A. France. If you read it through, you saw that I spoke with highest respect of the Catholic point of view and its exponents. That respect represents my feeling. The references in the earlier part of the article, which you erroneously took for my sneers, represent only the "world's" attitude just now towards all religious life.—I can't help adding that you Catholics are too sensitive. The Protestants are hammered with bludgeons every day in the week, and without a peep in response!—But so far as I am concerned I fell very much in love with the Catholic Church in France last summer—so much that it almost worried me! For pity's sake, reread the article to the point where I remark that I am almost convinced that nothing can withstand our decadent paganism but the Catholic Church.

Very sincerely yours,
Stuart P. Sherman.

He was rather more brusque with a gentleman who objected to "pacifist" leanings in an article on "The Known Dead."

(*To Boyd Van Benthuysen*[35])

April 6, 1925.

Dear Mr. Van Benthuysen:

My belated thanks for your comment on "The Known Dead." I read it over several times, quite understanding your point of view, however, the first time! In conclusion, I decided

[35]This letter never reached its address.

that my article had fairly enough presented the views of those who were pro-ally from the drop of the hat—as all the Mid-Western section with which I was acquainted was. What you object to apparently is any deference to the extreme pacifists. I presented their point of view partly because it has the intrinsic interest of all exteme points of view; and partly because, as an observer of the literary field, I am impressed with the increasing number of writers who resort to that point of view. I don't think there is any danger at all that the Kingdom of God will come in our time. Don't worry!

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

Complaints of this sort were of minor importance in comparison with the criticism of the general drift of his writing. The serious charges made against him were that he was deserting the position of which he had been one of the redoubtable champions and that he was lowering his literary standards to a journalistic level. Not only did former supporters cry "Treason!" but former opponents like Mr. Spingarn professed to miss "something of the old Puritan fervor."[36] Some readers expressed their confusion at finding writers highly praised in his pages who had previously been anathema to him. An anonymous contributor to the *New Republic* lamented that "even Stuart P. Sherman, once so savage in the opposite camp, has become as benevolent as Carl Van Doren and now occupies what has perhaps become, from the popular point of view, the central desk of authority, to which each of the performers in the all-star circus, from Ben Hecht to Ring Lardner,

[36]April 18, 1925. Mr. Floyd Dell's protest to the same effect is colored with a perception of the humor in the situation. "I am rather disappointed in *you*," he writes, "for not staying in the position you had seemingly put yourself in a few years ago, as the intellectual head and front of a reaction back to Plymouth Rock! I was aware that you didn't quite belong there, but you had a great social usefulness as the proper person to shy brickbats at—and you were so eminently suave and masterful in controversy with the Harold Stearnses of progress (progress toward the Café de la Rotonde)—yes, I miss you in that capacity. In fact, you have done me an ill turn by ceasing to appear as the protagonist of Puritanism in these Menckenesque times, and if you won't go on saying them, then it will confusingly devolve upon persons like me to take up occasionally that thankless job."—March 27, 1925.

steps up to receive his diploma."[37] There were some jeers too in the bosom of his family about the overdevelopment of his bump of philanthropy and his concern with subjects not worthy of the attention of dignified criticism.

Of these charges Sherman took full cognizance, and he entered his defense in the preface to *Critical Woodcuts*, the first collection of his papers from "Books." As far as his inconsistency was concerned he adopted the wise answer of Montaigne and Emerson, declaring that he had never taken a vow to carry any opinion unaltered to the grave. And as for his being indiscriminate in his choice of subjects, he explained that it was the first duty of a weekly commentator on current literature to present a fairly full and veracious report of what is going on,[38] to understand the entire conspiracy of forces involved in the taste of his day rather then to exploit his own predilections. "What is 'important' now and never may be so again has a charm for him which he would think it a kind of baseness and disloyalty not to admit and record." It was the inevitable condition of his new vocation that he should occupy

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[37]"The All-Star Literary Vaudeville," June 30, 1926.

[38]Cf. the letter to Jacob Zeitlin, November 18, 1924: "The job we took was to interest the *Tribune's* 'masses' in books." To John he wrote: "I'm sorry you don't think my criticism 'important.' It is hard to be 'important' every week. M. Arnold in his *lifetime* perhaps wrote fewer reviews than I have written in the last nine months. The year's work should be regarded as critical Chroniques." (June 19, 1925.) In his next letter, announcing that he is at work on Stewart Edward White, he remarks: "I suppose you will damn this subject as 'unimportant'; but we try to treat all aspects of things—and *Arizona Nights* has sold 108,000!!" (June 23.) A further interesting justification occurs in the review of Mr. Louis Bromfield's *Possession:* "It is not my intention ever to bring to the notice of my readers any 'thoroughly rotten book.' As for a book in which a serious artist attempts something new, difficult, questionable and forever caviare to the general, I find that such a book always receives its 'due meed of damnation,' either at the hands of Mr. Harold Bell Wright's hydra-headed multitude, who thoroughly ignore it; or at the hands of committees for the suppression of literature, who manage to gain for it a momentary public interest; or at the hands of academic persons and university presidents, who habitually utter blanket condemnations of all such books without ever attempting to discover what any of them is about. In commenting regularly upon current literature, I find myself drawn steadily more and more into the position of an interpreter whose adverse criticism is conveyed implicitly along with his understanding. I find myself driven toward this position by chivalry, by curiosity, by the need of restoring the balance. All the positions at which ignorant condemnation can be uttered are full." (October 11, 1925.)

himself with what was at the moment interesting, so that even in his choice of historical figures he seized upon those who "by reason of some vital congruity, are felt by us as 'modern' and pertinent to our present occasions." It was furthermore his belief that an annual chronicle so composed would in the end come together and "constitute a picture of his age and its tendencies."

If there seemed to be an important shift in his critical point of view, an abandonment of dogmatism and an open-minded receptivity to a great variety of phenomena, it was, frankly, owing to a shift in the center of his interest. Anyone who has read the preceding chapters attentively will have realized that this shift did not take place with the transfer from the university to a New York newspaper but had been going on definitely and unmistakably for a number of years. Whatever our judgment may be of the effect of this change upon Sherman's virtues as a critic, it is desirable to bear clearly in mind that it was not the result of a facile adaptation to his new environment. He found in his position on the newspaper the chance to carry on his researches as the "experimental humanist" in quest of "the good life." The principle which he now stated is but the bolder formulation of what he had been driving toward for some time: "The wise critic attempts on all possible occasions to keep his theoretical and didactic mouth shut and all his other faculties open, here, there, and everywhere, for all the reports and rumors of positive charm and joy in things and people, as the most indubitable tokens that they are participators in some degree of that 'good life' which he is seeking." And he wanted to make it clear that in spite of open-mindedness his quest did not involve an abdication of discrimination and judgment: "I have learned," he declared, "that patient search usually discovers some refreshing virtue wherever there has been exhibited any unusual display of energy. As I revisit my three little galleries I am impressed by the abundance and variety and high interest of the vital powers exhibited there. Taking my 'sitters' one by one, I rather think that my main intention has been to feel strongly the unique life in all these men and women from Sherwood Anderson to the Known Soldier, and to communicate the impetus of it, in a sort of blind faith that 'where there is life there is hope,' and where there is power there is virtue."

This was not the only line of justification that was open to Sherman. It was the one, however, which suited his immediate purpose, which was to focus attention upon the qualities in literature which yielded an enrichment of experience. He might, if he had been anxious to vindicate a reputation for consistency, have emphasized—what his explanation only suggests—that his attitude was as moralistic as it had ever been, inasmuch as he still looked in literature for evidence of the good life, though he was now less certain than he had been as to what the good life really was. He might, indeed, have gone further still and pointed out that in his seemingly new receptivity he was but reclaiming a portion of his nature which he had deliberately repressed through many years, that he was trying to restore a balance between his faculties which he had disturbed by an excessive faith in the value of a rigid discipline. He would have had the right to declare that in point of fact he had never completely surrendered to the system of thought with which his name had been for some time identified but had always been more susceptible in his sympathies, both moral and æsthetic, than the leaders of his school. Had he lived two years longer, he might have given out as his own the statement of a distinguished French critic whose name is closely linked in the minds of American students of literature with that of Sherman's first master in criticism.

The career of M. Pierre Lasserre offers in certain relevant particulars a very striking analogy to that of Sherman. M. Lasserre is probably the most notable figure in the modern attack on Romanticism. Very recently he made a confession of liberal faith which so startled the literary public of France that he felt called upon to give his *Apologia*, justifying himself fundamentally on the ground that he was but reaffirming sympathies which had been his own from the beginning. He describes himself as a young man, endowed at the same time with imagination and an analytic gift, eager for universal knowledge and for the illumination of a critical principle which had given to modern man a thousand contacts with all that is human, had strikingly broadened and enriched his idea of the moral world, had opened his soul to a thousand impulses from all historic ages. In this expansive drift he received a sudden check when circumstances brought him face to face with the

representatives of an extreme of sentimental idealism. His sense of reality was outraged by their disregard of the sober facts of human nature and human society, and it was in reaction to their chimerical excesses that he composed his *Romantisme français*—a polemic directed against their disturbing illusions and perhaps, to a certain extent, against himself. This book, he maintains, was not essentially anti-liberal, but an arraignment, sometimes severe and harsh, of certain definite errors, and it was not intended "to found an entire philosophy of history based on the eternal conflict between a principle of disorder and a principle of order," as has been done by certain others treating of the same subject. The consequence of such an attempt at a violent separation of certain sources of intellectual and moral culture from certain others which have contributed equally to modern humanity, is that one runs the risk of erecting a system which makes for impoverishment and aridity and that the attitude of opposition and hostility gains the upper hand in the minds of its votaries over the disposition to sympathy and receptivity. It rejects too many things. To too many things, and to the most precious among them, it says, "No."

"I," says M. Lasserre in conclusion, "have never professed such a creed. That is why, after having said 'No' to a few things which I believe deserve it, I have myself very naturally returned to the liberal position. Liberalism says 'Yes' to whatever is good. And that is why it is opposed to all systems. Our spirits are too weak and things are too complex to enable us to construct universal systems with affirmations. We only attain to the semblance of it by throwing in negations which we disguise as affirmations and which may satisfy our personal pride but do not satisfy the human soul. God alone, the absolute mind, would have the right not to be liberal, because he is supposed to embrace the infinite with a single glance. For ourselves, who can see only dimly and fragmentarily, let us keep wide open our doors and windows so that new impressions may always find access, without prejudice from the assumptions of a wisdom previously acquired. More than in all dogmatisms, let us have confidence in the firmness and openness of a spirit which preserves its freedom."[39]

[39] "Retour au Libéralisme," *Nouvelles Littéraires*, September 8, 1928.

This is not very far from the language which Sherman made use of in his own case. The question which may fairly be raised in connection with such a defense is whether the new approach results in dulling the edge of discrimination and whether it is more or less fruitful in the discovery of values. In looking among his subjects for "an unusual display of energy," for signs of vitality and of beauty, did Sherman lose his critical head and discover in them virtues which they did not possess? Doubtless in a few instances the importance of a writer was exaggerated. At least in the case of Don Marquis Sherman was willing to admit that he had overshot the mark.[40] In his treatment of writers like D. H. Lawrence, Ben Hecht, Sherwood Anderson, Floyd Dell, his appreciation, as far as it goes, does not imply entire acceptance of the work of the men. He is actuated primarily by a desire to understand and by a willingness to applaud a sincere and individual outlook on life. He withholds his approval from them as often as he bestows it, and his discrimination is evident enough in what he refrains from saying. Even some of his striking reversals of judgment are more apparent than real. What looks on the surface like a change of feeling is only a shifting of the interest to an aspect of the artist's work which his earlier point of view had not permitted him to dwell on; or it may be only the result of a change in the artist himself. His praise of Theodore Dreiser, after the severity with which he had previously handled his novels, is certainly not to be reckoned among his self-contradictions. He is extremely careful to set his later judgment alongside of his earlier one and to point out that whatever change has taken place has been in Dreiser himself who, in *An American Tragedy*, had taken a long stride toward "a genuine and adequate realism." "It appeared to me then [1915]," he said, "that he was the outstanding representative in American fiction of a point of view which I then considered, and still consider, tragic, disastrous. . . . In the decade since *The Genius*, Mr. Dreiser has been observing, meditating and revising his views of American society, the nature of reality and the nature of realistic fiction. . . .

[40]In the original article he had said that *The Dark Hours* should affect us "as the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles affected the Greeks." In reprinting it in *Critical Woodcuts*, which he did at the urging of the publishers, he toned the statement down considerably by adding "—religiously."

Mr. Dreiser has changed both his method and his point of view. . . . He appears to me now for the first time in his fiction to be seeking sincerely and pretty successfully to tell the truth." There is no conflict with his previous verdict on Mr. George Moore in the pronouncement that perfection of form is that gentleman's one morality and that every one of his books would repay the study of the artist. There is a *revision* of judgment rather than a reversal implied in his praise of the design of Mrs. Wharton's novels. He had once held her art in rather lower esteem, and his apology for her at this time was partly in protest against the restricted sociological test which Mr. R. M. Lovett applied to her stories. "Is there, or is there not," he asked, "always an abundance of new novels available of just the sort which the proletariat likes? I think there always is. But of *this* sort one is fortunate if one encounters two or three in a season, which is not an excessive supply for a class of readers who are less in need of sweeping sociological vision than of precisely what Mrs. Wharton offers."

Such flexibility is a positive gain in the equipment of a critic of literature. It enables him to review Mr. Francis Hackett immediately after Mrs. Wharton and to say, "If Mrs. Wharton and those people hadn't insisted on being quite so refined, Mr. Hackett and these people wouldn't have insisted on being quite so robust, *n'est-ce pas?*" It enables him also to make a definite and unquestionable reassessment of Mr. H. G. Wells and to emphasize a virtue in his work which he had slighted in the earlier treatment of him. But here too, it should be noticed, there is no retraction but only the completion of a one-sided estimate. "You are no realist, Mr. Wells," Sherman says in conclusion. "Unlike Mr. Hardy and Joseph Conrad, you have small respect for Chance, and you minimize Necessity, those great powers in the real world. But you have been a brave myth-maker and a heartening poet to the Intellectuals of our time. You have turned an entire generation of novelists and readers from contemplating the fatal forces of heredity and environment and instinct to consider the god-like power of an intelligent will to control instinct and environment and heredity."

A range of interests that shows constant awareness of his large newspaper audience, taking in politics, society, science,

and religion along with every aspect of pure literature, and a sympathetic presentation of a remarkable variety of moods is what characterizes the succession of Sherman's essays as they appeared in "Books." From De La Mare's "'blessed' mood of appreciation for all manner of shy and lovely things and beings" he passed to Miss May Sinclair's challenge to conventional morality for the enrichment of the personal life. One week he is looking into the melancholy heart of Mark Twain, brooding on "the pathos and futility" of existence, and a few weeks later he is vindicating Robert Louis Stevenson's "quite 'modern' mode of confronting reality" in combining courage with gayety and grace. Another interval of two weeks and he invites you, with the aid of Ben Hecht's spectacles, to look with "straight uncolored eye beams" into the atrocities that lie in the deeper recesses of your own "inner consciousness." His types of personal vitality vary from the highly civilized Barrett Wendell to the elemental Brigham Young, and his appreciation of art from the stylistic "seduction" of Anatole France and George Moore to the reckless power of a Mencken or the crude frontier humor of Paul Bunyan and his blue ox.

A cordiality as embracing as was compatible with the preservation of literary values was the ideal which Sherman's practice was driving at. His persisting loyalty to standards may be inferred from the way in which, during the first two months of his editorship, he redefined his attitude toward his contemporaries in criticism. To be sure he continued, on the one hand, to voice his dissent from the austerer school of critics and to declare that "if you mark your flag with 'Prohibition,' 'Inhibition,' 'Restriction,' 'Convention,' '*Frein vital*,' 'Inner Check,' there is danger that it will rally only, or mainly, those merely gap-filling persons who could not be blasted out of their sterile conventionality with dynamite," and that youth rallies only "to some positive object for the expansive and creative energies."[41] But on the other hand, with every effort to be fair to his good qualities, he did not hesitate to point out in Mr. Canby an apparent inaptitude "for either those passionate attachments or those biting antagonisms through which less easily sympathetic minds achieve self-definition," while in Mr. Mencken he

[41] "Books," October 19, 1924; *Critical Woodcuts*, p. 112.

continued to deplore a "wholly uncritical and grobian carelessness about the truth."[42]

As soon as the essays were collected the reviews with one accord reported their discovery that a great change had taken place in the critical philosophy of Stuart Sherman. Nearly all of them sharpened the antithesis by making his first book the basis of comparison and ignoring the evidence of his drift in the intervening years. In their judgment of the change, their opinions varied. The harshest one came from a former disciple, Mr. Gerald Carson, in whose analysis there was a great deal of shrewdness but an utter absence of sympathy and a tone of unbecoming mockery which vitiated whatever validity it might have had as criticism.[43] With a good deal more decorum another

[42]In the *Bookman* for January, 1925, in a brief article on "Mr. Brownell and Mr. Mencken," Sherman once more exposed the latter's insensitiveness to truth, his unscrupulousness in controversy, and his evasion of the issues raised by his opponents, concluding with sufficient mordancy: "My own growing suspicion is that, despite all his profession of toughmindedness, despite his oft avowed joy in glorious battle, Mr. Mencken is at heart a confirmed pacifist with as profound a distaste as Sir Andrew's for cold steel."

[43]"Mr. Stuart Sherman Discovers Aphrodite Pandemos," *Bookman*, June, 1926. Mr. Carson apprised Sherman that he had written this article and expressed the hope that he was violating no propriety in recording his "distrust of a change which he could not accommodate himself to." (April 27, 1926.) To which Sherman replied with the following note:

DEAR JERRY:

Your letter reminds me of the old story of Ruskin and the Artist:

Ruskin: I have been obliged to cut you up in the next number of the Review; but I trust it will make no difference in our friendship.

Artist: The next time we meet I shall knock you down, but I trust it will make no difference in our friendship.

As I have not had the pleasure of reading either your article or the proof, I can form no notion, naturally, of its contents, except by your appearance and air in the letter of just having wiped bloody hands, and the indirect rumor which has reached me that the article is "very nasty."

I hope that it is at least well written.

Sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

May 9, 1926.

Against the possibility of being twitted with the title of Mr. Carson's critique, Sherman had a retort at hand: "Don't you wish you had?" When John commented on the article after its appearance, he delivered himself on it more freely: "Jerry's guiding spirit as a writer is to show himself superior to whatever author he is commenting on. That is an ancient tradition. But Jerry can't always live up to it.—However, I think his main obtuseness is in failing to make any distinction between writing three or four addresses annually for college boys, and writing a weekly article on current books for

former student, Mark Van Doren, gave it as his opinion that in its new phase Sherman's criticism had lost something of its positive virtue, but he looked upon it as only a transition to a position of greater significance.[44] It was writers like Mrs. Mary Colum and Mr. Van Wyck Brooks who hailed the "conversion" with the greatest satisfaction. In Mrs. Colum's treatment of Sherman there is still too much of critical superiority. Her numerous reservations are not always valid, but at least she approves of his "profound response to life" and says that "his criticism, even when it is poorest as an evaluation of literature, and even when the literature it evaluates is of as poor a quality as Don Marquis's poetry, has a richness of thought and feeling which give him the air of the great critics" and that "it is hard to believe that a collection of weekly articles by any other contemporary critic could stand up against these without suffering."[45] According to Mr. Van Wyck Brooks his "newly awakened sympathy with the modern world" made Sherman the most interesting figure in American criticism. He, too, looked upon the present stage as a preparation for something of even greater importance: "He responds so quickly to strong feeling in others, his curiosity has so mastered his other faculties that we never quite know where he is going to jump. But he seems to be destined for a third incarnation. He is the only critic in America to-day who writes of the past and the present with equal relish. Of the past he writes with relish and authority. Is he going to be able to command the modern world with the same genial assurance? He has only to take one further step to make his position unique in American literature."[46]

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the newspaper public. If you are reviewing current literature it is your business to see what is in it, and to characterize it. Jerry rather childishly assumes that I accept all the moods and withal[?] all the opinions which I characterize from week to week; and the article is biased by his desire to put that notion across to his readers, so that he actually doesn't use all his quotations quite honestly. But he is a young person, and he feels that he learned this better way of dealing with authors at my feet, so that I am not entitled, perhaps, to complain." June 10, 1926.

[44]*Nation*, April 17, 1926.

[45]*Saturday Review of Literature*, June 26, 1926. See letter to Irita Van Doren, p. 774.

[46]"Books," April 18, 1925.

CHAPTER XXXII

LETTERS TO JOHN

THE great interest of Sherman's life, apart from his work, during the first year in New York, was in watching the progress of John at Harvard. His intimacy with his only son, which is something distinct from paternal affection, had grown appreciably in the preceding year. John was the representative of the younger generation with whom he was most concerned to arrive at an understanding. John's attitudes and reactions were an object of loving study during the summer in Europe, holding in them the promise of a development in the direction of the father's desires. Worry over an illness of the preceding spring had been allayed by the apparent recovery, and the only thing that troubled Sherman was the possible difficulty John, who was not yet seventeen, would have in adjusting himself to the methods of Harvard after a fairly smooth year at the University of Illinois. "At Illinois," he wrote to him by way of encouragement, "every one tries to fan and foster the efforts of anyone who gives any sign of desiring to be anything. But at Harvard I think it is almost a tradition to sort of rebuff a fellow in order to see whether he has any spunk in him. They did that certainly when I was there to the candidates for the Ph. D., and some of them just went ahead and wrote their theses and left them like babies at the door."[1] To Professor Babbitt he wrote a letter bespeaking his interest and describing his hopes and expectations of John.

(*To Professor Irving Babbitt*)

70 Morningside Drive,
New York City,
Dec. 11, 1924.

DEAR BABBITT:

If John doesn't make your acquaintance before he leaves Harvard, I shall feel that it was idle to send him up there—of

[1]October 6, 1924.

course! I thank you for intimating that he will be kindly received at 6 Kirkland Road, and I shall pass the word to him. At the present moment he is in quite recent receipt of an official letter from Dean Whitney which I suppose and hope is causing him for the time being to shut out the world. But when he has improved his reputation with his German and French teachers I trust he may be able to take advantage of some of the other opportunities of Harvard life. John is still very much of a youth, being just past seventeen, but his mind, I believe, has much more critical edge than his father's; and if the machine system doesn't terrify him out of letters into chemistry I think he has a fine chance in him of doing something creditable in the former subject, after he grows up. I can't quite make out why the young person of some literary inclination is so regularly driven by our academic organization to regard the college as a wicked stepmother. Can you? I don't mean that John is in that mood yet. He seems to be enjoying life, especially outside the classroom, and to be growing. But already he begins to comment, like an infant Henry Adams, on the mechanical form of mental testing by which the college attempts to determine whether he is a numskull. As for myself, I am now for the first time studying in a disinterested way Higher Education.

With best regards,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

During the Christmas vacation John was again ill, but the physicians who examined him seemed not to be disturbed by his condition, and he returned to college. His father wrote to him at frequent intervals, amusing him with fragments of gossip about his own work, making comments on the authors whom John happened to be reading, giving useful advice on the art of writing, responding sympathetically to complaints, and not neglecting, with a kind firmness, to admonish him about his mistakes. "Yes," he writes to him at the mid-years, "they do sock it to you on Harvard exams; and, as in tennis, the only thing to do is to sock it back."[2]

[2]January 30, 1925.

Some helpful instruction on writing is conveyed in the following letters.

(*To John*)

70 Morningside Drive,
[December (?), 1924].

. . . In your fiction and poetry (for that matter in everything) be as *concrete* and *specific* in vocabulary as possible. That is the key to *freshness* and *interest.*

A little illustration of what I mean. This week my long article is on an edition of Boswell's letters. I have occasion in describing B.'s later life to describe his misery and anxiety after his wife died in having a little boy with him in bachelor apartments in the city—First I wrote "the boy had no one to associate with but *servants.*" Going over the letters I found that the servants were "an old housekeeper and my footman." So I struck out "servants" and put in "old housekeeper and a footman." That sort of detail "gets" the reader; and you can apply that process of *heightening* to every one of the parts of speech—especially the *verbs.* Verbs are often neglected by young writers. Verbs may be very "colorful" words. You will often find that you can greatly key up your writing by going through and striking out the lifeless verbs and inserting live ones.

I don't want to bore you by talking about my own writing! But you may find some hints in that article on Pierre Loti—hints at another, closely related, source of vitality in writing. That is sensuousness. Learn to distinguish, by the way, between *sensual*, which is almost always used in a bad sense, and *sensuous* which means only appealing to the five senses, more or less. Good descriptive writing is always sensuous.—To sharpen your reader's senses, by prodding his sense of smell, taste, etc., wakes him up to what you are saying, makes him feel that he is alive. Loti is a great master of that method. Boswell in his *Johnson*, Defoe, everywhere, are two great masters of the specific detail. Your vulgar reader can dispense almost with thinking if you prod his senses sharply. This is an aspect of the literary art which since I have been writing for the large audience of a

newspaper I think about more frequently than when I wrote for a more academic audience.

(*To The Same*)

70 Morningside Drive, March 4, 1925.

DEAR JOHN:

"Before Dawn" is, *in the most promising respect*, O. K.—i.e. it relates to real experience, real observations, real feeling in fresh sincere phrasing. You have started right. It might have all kinds of metrical sophistication and all kinds of rhetorical furbelows and all sorts of metaphorical rings on its fingers and bells on its toes; and yet not be, in my opinion, as promising as this, because this has the *substance of life* in it. You have the right relation of a promising writer to the writer's material.

Second virtue: *it actually gets the dawn feeling*—the hush and coolness and then the little homely sights and sounds, and I think your last line *very effective* (as well as various other lines).

Now for the criticism:

(1) A couple of lines are *prosy* in movement or diction; and in a short poem one can afford *no* prosy line. One must go over the piece, when one has got the main effect, and test and check up each line as a mechanic tests each bolt in an airplane before letting it seek the sky, for one defective bolt may bring it down smash.

It is getting lighter

I won't tell you how to express a poetical sense of the *growth of light*—but you haven't imparted any *life* to your sense of the awareness of increasing light and the delicate breathing of light over the surface of the gray world, and the gradual change it makes.—You *ought* to express it *simply*, as you have done; but you ought also to express it beautifully—and you haven't quite done that.

(2) *On the building across the street*—another prosy line. Can't you see your windows in a frame of more interest—? "The windows begin to shine"—O. K. so far; but the emotion of that aware[ness] falls flat on the undifferentiated "building across the street." It need not at all be a picturesque ivy-clad building.

It may just as well be an old factory building—on which the light works its magic.—

> "This *barren* heath receive
> The incomparable pomp of eve,
> Behind yon shivering trees be drawn
> The icy glories of the dawn."

(3) In the *rhythmical* and *emotional* scheme of the poem as a whole there is not, I think, quite enough tension, intensity. You have a good tension scheme in the suggested contrast between the awe and hush of dawn, night, stars, etc. and the little homely vulgarities of the day.—But it isn't quite keyed up to its *full effect.* Your lines have the effect of successive *notations* rather than of successive *pulses* of feeling. That is partly due to the two or three lines that are *not* felt—the lines that I have cited, which break the continuity and rhythm of the felt parts. See what I mean?

Of course the person sitting in the window is the *knot,* so to speak, which ties these impressions into a poem. It is a question whether you might not screw up your effect a little tighter by just one hint of a subjective note. But that is a question.

In conclusion, the poem *almost* arrives. If you simply work on the process of eliminating every phrase that isn't emotionally alive, you will find that the total rhythmical effect will more or less look after itself.

One other general hint about reading verse. Don't read verse to yourself as if the *line* were the unit of rhythmical effect. Or rather study the total rhythmical *pattern* through the stanza —how one line is related rhythmically to the one which follows, and the third to both the others. How one flows into the next, halts, cataracts, slides, glides, holds its breath, etc.—Notice Milton's masses of waves running up to a reef and crashing. Has Magoun explained what is called the "return" in verse? Read first 50 lines, Book *three,* "Paradise Lost."

Affectionately,
FATHER.

John plunged hard into certain "activities" and sometimes needed to be recalled to a sense of proportion, even when his zeal was directed to the launching of a literary magazine.

Doubtless the overexcitement at comparatively minor mishaps was traceable to the state of his health, but this was not at the time apparent to the family. At any rate, the first two of the following letters, though they are not unsympathetic, would probably have been couched somewhat differently if the true state of affairs had been known.

(*To John*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
Feb. 4, 1925.

DEAR JOHN:

I'm writing this to assure you I am thinking of you and your German exams, by the time you read this. The exams at Harvard *are* rather gruelling, aren't they? One is rather a "wreck," as you say. But "life is like that"! And one gets over it. . . . Night before last, for exam[ple], I was a total wreck at 2 in the morning on the completion of a long article on Don Marquis! How funny! Having read 13 vols. and written about 2500 words on him that week. But I had to get up next day and write a Letter to the Lady. And last night I had to go over into New Jersey and deliver a lecture. To-day we are making-up, and I'm starting the next article. Well, it's amusing. To add to the interest, we are busy with real estate agent; for we *bought* the house—"52 Jane St." I hope you will like it!—We are going to put in heat and electricity about the first of May, and plan to move in in June.—It's a good sized place—a little bigger than the Van Dorens'—a couple of feet wider, I think, and something of that type.

The Advocate came yesterday. I was delighted with "The Terrapin." I think it right and well-balanced. You have the *tone of fairness*, which is a great thing to strive for in all critical writing; and it is spirited, too. I was so tickled that I took it down town and showed it to Irita. She thought about it as I said; and said nice words about you. We think your English will do,—even if you get only a C.—Hold up the French and German end, and we'll look after the English.

I was much interested too in your comment on Anatole France and Pierre Loti. To me, the great thing in France is his luminous, limpid, tranquilly easy flow: *Which he got by writing each piece*

seven times over!—smoothing all the knots and wrinkles out—so that life and its problems look very simple and easy through his prose. Pierre Loti has other qualities. The lack of feeling for human beings which you notice in *Madame Chrysanthemum* is much more observable in that book than in any other. In the two stories of Brittany, which I mentioned, there is plenty of tenderness and sympathy and kindness for old people, and young people, etc. In fact one of Loti's most affecting notes is the *lacrimæ rerum*—the compassionate sense for human affairs, for human weakness and suffering.—In the case of both these authors, you will feel the spell more when you read them in French. The *music* of Loti in French is *haunting* almost anywhere. I got hold of *Un Pèlerin d'Angkor* and chanted aloud paragraph after paragraph; it is rich, somber, hypnotic music, and will fascinate you—like Dunsany, for example.

(*To The Same*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
March 30, 1925.

DEAR SPUG:

Hard luck about the rifle-sights! I'm sorry on your account. But you mustn't let such small things as rifle-sights obscure or eclipse for you the sun!—You have to learn this trick: To combine going in hard for a thing with ability to laugh when you don't get it. Lots of people laugh first and regret after; lots are grim before *and* after; but the real trick is to be serious while you are trying and gay after. And it can be done! I think it is the only adequate way to take the hazards and chances of this life.

You have still your eyesight and can try again, man. Last Wednesday night little Ann Van Doren was roller skating in the yard and fell just as a boy shot an arrow to that spot. It struck her eye and she is going to lose the sight of it. I helped take her to the hospital where they operated that night. Now that was a hard thing for Ann. But she took it "like a man." I saw her this morning at the hospital, and she was as gay as a cricket, and very sweet, and made no fuss at all.

You lose your sense of proportion when you let yourself go

like that, and you make your mother feel terribly. You have quite a nice group of friends, boys and girls, who like you and are interested in you. You have beside numerous acquaintances in whom you will find more friends. The *final rewards* of life aren't reaped in college anyway. You know well enough, or ought to know, that many of the boys who play around most in college, do nothing but play around afterwards. As for the "snobbish cliques" that you talk about, no clique that is snobbish is worth getting into. If you really want to play around in Cambridge and Boston, which I don't think you do, the way to enter is to follow up the invitations you have had to visit various families, most of which you have not cared to follow up.—The help that comes from money and social prestige you somehow seem to me greatly to over-estimate. Your family backing is plenty good enough to enable you to make friends and have a good time in Cambridge. As a matter of fact, your family has no great deal to do with it—except as it has been responsible for making you what you are—a good lively agreeable youth—in my opinion, Spuggy, when you haven't lost your sense of proportion, a bit. When you let off steam, your sense of humor flies out at the escape valve with the steam.

I've been glad to see you going in for things; and tickled when you scored at anything; but, heavens, we are young yet, and don't have to make all our record this spring. *Par exemple*, I am going on 44, and hope to do something *yet* in spite of many targets that I've missed. At seventeen, a man's chances are simply immense. All you ought to have done—after the shooting turned out ill—was to resolve to *test* your sights before going into another match! What! There is almost always a *practical* outlet for the energy that we waste in *extravagant emotion*. Now, old Boy, write again soon to the Family and make a display of wisdom this time! I sat down immediately after your letter came to assure you that all would yet be well. Reciprocate please.—Now I've got to turn to a Caroline letter, which is late.

Much love from
FATHER.

We went down to Wall St. and paid the last on the house this noon. I think you will like it.

S. P. S.

(*To The Same*)

April 13, 1925.

Dear Spug:

You are quite right about *The Return of the Native*, *me judice*, which means, in my opinion (Ablative absolute: nom., *ego judex*). It overshadows most of the worm-eaten contemporary peanuts as Greylock overshadows an anthill. It deals with the elements and the elementals of life in a large way; and when you come out of it, you feel that you have been in the *Universe*, and not in the Turkish Café!

Sorry you didn't score in Phil. as you had hoped: but the real score, always remember please, is between you and all-judging Jove, and he, at least, has got it right—however the pencil of the Phil. instructor may have erred.

John Finley, Sr., has a corking article in last Sunday *Times* "Magazine," asking all good men to join him in walking 1000 miles before the first of next April. He offers a medal, which he designed, for the first 1000 walkers. That is about 3 miles a day; one day, there has to be a walk of at least 26 miles. I hope you will join the *À la Sainte Terre* Club. I enclose the article.

I read it last night after I went to bed, and to-day walked from here to the Office, 116th to 40th St.; feeling much better since, physically and spiritually. Try it in the city if you don't take to the country; going past the shops, and seeing what they tell you about the life of your fellow-citizens. I did 40 blocks on Amsterdam Avenue; and saw every type of fruit and vegetable on the market; three kinds of onions, green and purple cabbages, carrots, beets, spinach, egg plant, rhubarb, turnips, squash, peas, lima beans, string beans, strawberries, pineapples, greenings, winesaps, oranges, grapefruit, bananas, etc., etc. Then I walked 50 or 60 blocks on Broadway, and saw all kinds of clothing, hats, flowers, and automobiles. "Take no thought for the morrow; what ye shall eat, or what ye shall wear," hammered in my head as I went through the groceries and clothiers of New York.

À la Sainte Terre.

We hope you will come home in as good shape, and in good spirits this time, and have a good time.

Your mother has sent two letters, one with term bill check, one with check to come home. Also the keys in a package.

Affectionately,
FATHER.

I had a note from Edmonds about the *Advocate* and the *Dial* parody. To which I replied. Also called the matter again to notice of our Staff.

John came home again at the spring recess, and this time his ailment expressed itself all too clearly. The doctors diagnosed tuberculosis and ordered immediate removal to Colorado. At the beginning of May Mrs. Sherman went out to place John in the sanatorium at Cragmor. How Sherman took the blow may be seen in his reply to some words of encouragement from one of John's friends, and in the series of letters which now began to flow to John himself.

(*To Joseph Bailey*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
May 4, 1925.

DEAR MR. BAILEY: No, I guess it's DEAR JOE BAILEY,

I'm always telling John that he treats me very indulgently, as a father should; and your letter gave me much the same feeling. You were very kind to write as you did, and I appreciate it deeply. The last gay word we had from J. in Cambridge was about his trip with you to Plymouth. The physician here says he infers that J. has "good resistance." He thinks a year should set him up pretty well; at least so he said. John takes it like a philosopher. I am proud of the way he took the verdict and the exile. "If it's a choice between heaven and hell for me," he said, "I'll always choose the well-heated place." You needn't think we shall worry about getting him back to college. Some time I hope he will be able to finish his education; but I shall not have a single thought about that till he is set up in health.— Your experience is encouraging. The thing is a blow of course, and it struck me of all places at the one where it could hurt me most. But I see no good in whining; and we've much to be

thankful for if Providence will continue to let me give him as good care as we can get. Meanwhile it would ill become us to turn into invalids, either physical or spiritual!

I hope you are devouring the Law with your customary appetite. My regards and best wishes to you, and my gratitude for your kindness.

Very sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

To John, Sherman wrote practically every other day, taking turns with Mrs. Sherman. Only a few weeks before this he had written: "I know what a hard thing it is for these Shermans to say or acknowledge that they are fond of one another! However, it is a good thing for these silent men to acquire a little expressiveness on suitable occasions."[3] The suitable occasion had arrived, and there was now a note of poignant tenderness in the expression of the father's affection, with as much of bracing philosophy as the situation admitted. In his first letter he tells John that he has just finished his essay on Oscar Wilde and said to himself, in putting the handsome blue set back on the shelf, "That will be for Spuggins when he wants it; and then I looked around at all the other good books, and thought just the same thing about them."[4] On subsequent days he writes to him of the prosperous sales of *My Dear Cornelia*, of attending his first Academy dinner (May 6th), of an amusing incident at the office with two well-dressed respectable-looking ladies afflicted with a Catholic phobia. When the first letter arrived from John, with its not unnatural atmosphere of depression, Sherman replied: "It seems kind of tough to contemplate keeping still so long, if you contemplate it all at once; but you will develop a *recumbent* psychology pretty soon, see if you don't. Of course, so far as I am concerned, I should be perfectly happy to take a few weeks in bed just now! And I wouldn't have to develop the recumbent psychology at all; I've already got it. . . . As I said in an earlier letter, don't write about 'copy' unless you feel like it. Don't worry about anything. Just take it easy, and get *robust*. Make as much mental capital out of your present experience as you can, as you go along. I find that a great com-

[3]March 15, 1925.
[4]May 3, 1925.

fort for myself when I have to go places, and to see people that I don't care to go nor to see. I say to myself: 'Ah, this is experience. This is some of the stuff of which human life is made. Let's salt it down for future reference, such as it is.' Regarded as material to think about, almost anything may be treated as mildly amusing. Look at yourself as a spectator of your own play, and all sorts of rather interesting points come out.

"Dear old Spuggin, I tell everyone who asks how you 'take it' that you are a 'philosopher,' and I really believe you are. If you don't like these little bits of my own philosophy which I send you from time to time, it is no doubt because you have some better idea of your own. But I send them along, because my mind is trying as well as it can to sort of keep along beside you, and take part with you in adjusting itself to sleeping porch life. Your mother and I think about you and talk about you so much to one another that you *seem* almost closer than when you were at Cambridge, and I hope you feel that way about us. We love you very much, and we are going to have some good times together when they fix you up. Oh rather specially good times. But we are going to have some good times before that right away by getting even better acquainted with one another than we are already."[5]

The three letters that follow call for no comment.

(*To John*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
May 15, 1925.

Dear Spuggin:

Yesterday I went down to Macy's at 34th St. and got you a package of "plastilene," which your mother wrapped up and mailed to you to-day. It is a kind of plastic clay—blue and white. It struck me that you might find it amusing to play with in idle hours. You can imagine yourself the Divine Providence or Setebos creating the animals to send into the ark. You will be interested to see how the curves of the face shape themselves naturally under the pressure of the thumb; how, if you push *in* an eye, by the same [motion] you push *up* a forehead and a nose, or

[5]May 12, 1925.

the rudiments of them, so that all you have to do is to coax the ridge of the nose up a bit higher. I suppose the organs were formed originally in the human embryo by some such simplicity of indenting pressure.—This aspect of modeling in clay fascinates me so that I could play all day with a handful of the stuff, watching what comes without my foresight as a mere concomitant consequence of what I have done.[6]

We got your first post card yesterday, in which you indicated that you were not feeling very robust, "mentally or physically." Naturally, we are mighty anxious to have another card soon, saying just a little more than that.

Affectionately,
FATHER.

(*To The Same*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
May 20, 1925.

DEAR SPUGGINS:

Your letter of yesterday delighted me much. That is the one in which you declare you are no Stoic but an Epicurean *in posse* if not *in esse*, or perhaps *in ovo*, just waiting to flap out and crow on the fence. I thought that very good *philosophy* indeed, and it cheered my heart to the cockles. . . . But I must one of these days get you a copy of Marcus Aurelius, just to react against.

Don't mind my peevish requests for news in my recent letters. That was due to my having been worried by the post card you wrote a week or so ago. As long as you are cheerful and content and time flies, and you are physically feeling as well as a man in bed can be expected to feel, I will bear up my end, and not clamor for letters at all, when you don't feel like writing them. The only point is that you are our only source of bulletins as yet. And we do want to know as soon as possible how you are reacting to the climate, whether you begin to feel bucked up at all, whether the rain has stopped, etc.

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[6]On June 15th he writes to John of how he is amusing himself with the same pastime: "While at work on the second [article], I got a little lump of plastilene and molded me a sort of dog-woman gargoyle . . . to sit on the table and gaze at me. She helped."

(*To The Same*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
May 22, 1925.

DEAR BOY:

Your letter came to-day containing the long list of books that you have read. I mention this primarily to identify the letter, so that you may know at just what point of contact we are. *Not* because I am more interested in the books than in the other matters you touch upon! I am tremendously interested in them all.

Since you mention the books, I will just say in passing that I thought the list a bit "decadent." I didn't myself much care for the *René*. It belongs to a kind of morbid phase of Nineteenth Century French fiction—sort of down at the mouth, and down at the heels,—it belongs to youth, I know, rather to relish what is a bit morbid.

Just having finished the 1400 pages of Dr. Osler's life, I am feeling that everything about hospitals and sick people should be full of science and good will, and faith and *health!* The evolution of medicine in the last fifty years and the whole science of healing is one of the most splendid chapters in the history of mankind.

Osler's second book, the second one that he bought, was Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*. He read it daily for the rest of his life. When he grew older and richer he bought all the editions that have ever been printed—some sixty, I think. I bought a copy about 1897 and have read it ever since. It is a wonderfully beautiful work—in spirit and in style. All the English stylists from Charles Lamb to Pater have loved it.

I went out to-day to see if I couldn't find a pretty little edition of it for you. But I couldn't find anything at the stores where I went but the Everyman; so I shall have to look further. But I came on the Golden Treasury *Marcus Aurelius*, and mailed a copy to you. You will come to appreciate the "sweet reasonableness" in him, and to love him for that, even if the colder Stoical parts don't appeal to you. I don't care for the colder parts of Stoicism myself. What appeals to me is the rationality of temper which characterizes these men. Taine called Marcus

Aurelius a "fifth gospel for skeptics"—or something like that. . . .

Did you notice that Amy Lowell had died? We published one of her last poems, written for us, in "Books." Julian Mason, our managing editor, said that was what he called "journalism." I shall always treasure one of her cigars which she gave me this spring. She called up on long distance telephone just a few weeks ago to correct another poem of hers we were printing.

I am making an effort to get Joseph Hergesheimer to let me nominate him for the Nat'l Academy.

I don't think of any other literary news: except another nice letter from Ellen Glasgow asking us to go and visit her in Richmond next fall. . . .

Your mother sends you her "dearest love" or something very much like that. She has been a very good girl—that is has looked after me carefully since she came back from Colorado!

Affectionately,
FATHER.

Did you ever hear Reed Powell's characterization of the man "who leaned neither to partiality on the one hand nor to impartiality on the other?"

S. P. S.

In the letters that follow, as many as five to a week, there is a description of a visit to Clarence Day, lying in his blue pajamas these fifteen years on his high bed and remaining chipper for all that, and there are some interesting informal comments on books, like the following: "I believe you are right about Sterne stealing from Rabelais. I've never enjoyed Rabelais. I never really enjoyed Sterne much till this year, when I began to read him on the subway between stations—first *The Sentimental Journey*, then *Tristram*."[7] "I have just read 550 pages of MSS.novel by a lady at Cornell, about the hard times professors' families have living in the style their imaginations are accustomed to."[8] "I read Ecclesiastes with much pleasure the other night on finishing my latest article. The Ecclesiast, you know, tried all forms of life under the

[7]May 26, 1925.
[8]June 8, 1925.

Photograph by Lois Zeitlin

PRESIDENT EDMUND J. JAMES OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

sun, including drinking, folly, and madness, and decided that most things were vanity, but that the joy one might get from the 'work of one's hands' had about the best chance of not being 'altogether vanity.' The Ecclesiastes is from the point of view of style one of the great books of the Bible. . . . I've been reading the life of A. France to-day. An old rascal but a rather gay one. Not being a Catholic, he felt it necessary to show the world that the life of the unbeliever was a gay one."[9]

To give John some amusement, Sherman asked Mrs. Mabel Lee to select a bowl of goldfish for him, and when the errand was graciously performed he sent her a letter of acknowledgment. At the same time he wrote to his mother on the state of John's health.

(*To Mrs. Mabel Lee* ["*Patricia Thorne*"])

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
June 3, 1925.

DEAR PATRICIA:

You executed the mission in a most masterly way—not merely executed it successfully but with art and triumph. I refer to the selection of distinguished and distinguishable individuals among the fish rabble, the selection of the central tower, the bowl, and the crab-meat. And more than that, you went yourself and appeared on the threshold like a Fairy Princess, thus making the day into an event at Cragmor. And more than that you wrote about your visit delightfully and about your "adventure" in the discovery of the fish. To give the final touch of grace you liked John—or spoke at least as if you thought him a likeable boy.—But I don't so much credit you for liking him, you understand, as for *saying so*. In the same mail with your letter came one from him describing the event; so we had the thing *four-square*. He was delighted—included a pen-drawing of the largest of the fish, so that we should appreciate his, or her, configurations. Between the two of you—both capital letter-writers—the morning here was gay.

By the way, do you ever try to see the whole business of life, the business of being a Dean and a Professor and a "burn-

[9] June 11, 1925.

ing and shining light" to the young, through the tinted crystalline lens of humor? I suspect you of desiring to see the spectacle as romance. I say, give it up! Try humor, instead. One can include, perhaps, a little vein or strain of romance in the humorous atmosphere. But humor is a much more comfortable, wearable, durable garment than romance. It is, for one thing, so much more *capacious*. Romance, comparatively speaking, is a skin-tight garment. But one can bring home the groceries in the side pockets of the other—and bowls of goldfish.

The last time before this, you wrote a letter trying to incite me to "rebellion" against routine unimaginative writing—criticism: It won't do. It is a "grind" but it is as close to what I wanted as I had a right to expect, rather closer. And I am learning a good bit from the experience. I wrote something like that to John about his experience in living at Cragmor: he could learn quite a bit from it. That sort of fruit comes to us from almost anything we are let in for, doesn't it?

Very gratefully yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

(*To Mrs. Ada P. Sherman*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
June 3, 1925.

DEAR MOTHER:

It seems to me we don't hear from Dorset very often this Spring. Is there anything special the matter up there which you are keeping from us? Don't do it. I had hoped to get off for some week-end and go up and see you. But there don't seem to be any week-ends in my business. However, if nothing novel falls from Heaven on us, we do expect a certain amount of vacation this summer, and I expect to see you before I go West.

You may readily imagine that for the last month or so, I have been rather turning the spare time I had for writing letters into writing to John. I must say he has acted like a Brick throughout. He hasn't written a word of complaint or lonesomeness or anything else of the sort since Ruth took him to Colorado. He lies in his bed and reads, or writes, or whatnot, and takes it all like a Philosopher.

He has acquired a cheap victrola from some other patient

who was leaving, and that gives him a rest for his eyes. Also I sent him a pound of plastic clay, which is nice to play with, and have just got a lady correspondent in Colorado Springs to take him a bowl of goldfish to replace his pets at Harvard. The Physicians there have sent no bulletins; but he sent one himself which sounded pretty well, that is, no new developments.

The news from the patient did not continue as favorable as the last letter suggests, and it was necessary to fix his attention on more cheerful prospects.

(*To John*)

70 Morningside Drive, New York,
July 2, 1925.

Dear Old Spug:

If you go into a forest and look *close*, you won't find a single tree that is perfectly straight, perfectly symmetrical, and perfectly sound from bark to core. To have a slant, to be a little lopsided, to have shaky spots is not the *unusual* but quite the usual, in fact, almost the universal order in nature. Look at those old *sequoia giganteas* in Yosemite! 3000 years old—and burnt hollow, lopsided, but green and good for 3000 years more —had as much rain and sun, lodged as many birds, sheltered as many travelers, shaded as many deer as if they had been trees standardized in a Ford factory.—It's a long parable but sound as a nut.—Your reflections on being laid up I thought about all day—as if I hadn't thought about them before you sent them!—These things are tough, but they all tell us there is hardly anybody who hasn't some old scars on his lungs.—You will have to be careful for a while; but not carefuller than multitudes of people have to be all the time, for shaky hearts, kidneys, etc., rheumatism, neuritis, etc. Look at old Quint—can't eat much of anything he likes or he's down and out. Look at Mrs. Neal with her broken hip, several months strapped to a board. Look at —— ——, with epilepsy announced 5 or 6 years ago. She pulled herself together, put herself in training, and made over her life, and she has just finished a novel she

has been working on two years—just quietly and steadily, and she seems as happy and composed as any of the young women I know.—And then again, R. L. S.—that game sport. In his time they knew practically nothing of the proper treatment. He put himself to tremendous strains and exposures, and worked like a dog for twenty years, and took on, as the story goes, other diseases that he needn't have had—and yet he had a thundering good time, and a big reputation, and made a great shelf-ful of good literature.

Now, in your case we intend to have you looked after so correctly and steadily that you will be put quite to rights, and able to live a normal happy life just the same as anyone else. If we hang together and keep on sawing [wood], we should be able to see quite a number of interesting things in the world. I've been wondering, for example, if we couldn't all run down to Havana in a year or so. And then my mind runs on Canadian and Californian mountains, etc.—Italy, China, etc., not to speak of nearer points which are easy possibilities when you graduate from what Dr. Miller called your "school of health." He thought in a year, you remember, that you could go back to college. I don't urge you to fix your mind on going back to college at that time, if that doesn't attract you at this time. You can fix it on a vacation camp somewhere if you like that better cracking jokes with your Mother and Dad.—For visitors tell me that you are a "wit." Other visitors say a "scholar." All I am sure of is that you have a mind which I like very much. And you'll get more and more pleasure out of its meditations, excogitations and explorations.—Mrs. Lee wrote that you asked her rather sharply: "What is, exactly, this mental hygiene?" I'm not worried about your mind. You have as sound, straight, sensible perceptions about things as anyone I know—superior to about 99.9% of them. You will do Mrs. Lee good! if you talk to her.

To-night I'm going up to Dorset to see my mother and sister and the small boy for a couple of days, or a day and a half. Sunday I expect to meet your Mother in Albany, and thence set out for Michigan. Later, you know, I'm expecting to travel on and have a look at you, and see if you are as husky as you ought to be by that time.—Thanks for sending me the bulletin. It seemed like a good one. I told Dr. Van Doren about

it—he was in town last night—and he said it was "fine" and most auspicious.—In Mich. we'll be a day's mail nearer. I'll still be writing articles as "per usual" to pay cost of transportation, and I hope I'll have a little more margin to make my compositions more elegant, and my matters more diverting. We expect to be in Manistee Monday, the 6th. So please direct to R. F. D. No. 1. Box 64B. and you will get a quick reply from Dad as soon as he can limber up the inkwell. I'll be thinking of you all the way out, dear boy, very proud of you, very fond of you and wishing you lots of philosophy and good old fighting spirit. We are going to make a good thing out of it, yet. You will see. And I think you will find that life gets more interesting and agreeable as you go on, with so many curious and amusing and fine things to think about which you have hardly coasted the edges of yet that you'll really be surprised. My train goes in about an hour and I must sort of pull things together.

Affectionately,
FATHER.

I took our old "Caroline" over to Scribner's to-day. They expect to publish in September. Mr. Maxwell Perkins of Scribner's is one of your friends, who asks about you.—His fifth daughter was born this spring.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FROM NEW YORK TO DUNEWOOD

BEFORE leaving New York for the summer Sherman for the first time entered the Century Club as a member. He had been nominated by Mr. Brownell in June, 1924, with a description of his qualifications for membership which was as exquisite a tribute as he had ever received:

"He has eminently the cosmopolitan mind, though never disloyal to the Puritan nor supercilious toward the provincial. . . . During recent years he has enriched the literature of his country with a remarkable series of books, each unsurpassed if indeed equalled in its special field, and, though on varied subjects, allied, not to say unified, by a thoroughly personal point of view and body of doctrine. All these works exhibit wisdom distilled by study, ripened by reflection and applied by a distinguished talent to the discussion of the most pertinent and pressing themes of life as well as literature—none of them with a trace of either academic pedantry on the one hand or romantic crudity on the other. It is difficult to hold one's hand in recounting the titles of this eminent American scholar and first of American critics."

The delay of a year in admission was not unusual, and in Sherman's case it was no great privation.

Leaving New York on July 2d, Sherman made his brief visit to Dorset and reached Dunewood according to schedule on July 6th. The release from the tremendous pressure under which he had been working in New York and the general atmosphere of this favorite spot might have been expected to bring him rest and refreshment. But it was quite otherwise. He began to feel lethargic and oppressed. The rapid tempo of the great city and the unremitting stimulus of his weekly article or articles had evidently become a condition of his happiness. He missed the personal contacts of his office and actually pined for his newspaper. He wanted to write, but his mind was stagnant and the ideas refused to flow. On the very

day of his arrival he began to complain of this mood, writing to John, "I'm afraid I shall miss the stimulus and pressure of our weekly issue. It's curious how one misses not *having* to do one's work instantly, after one is accustomed to that spur. . . . We howl about having to work under pressure and then we howl *because there isn't any pressure.* We are a hard lot to please."[1]

"I suffer," he adds a few days later, "from the lack of an 'abrasive' mind—to use another Spugginism. It strikes me as a sort of drowsy, sleepy place. Stendhal remarks somewhere that he felt the need for his well-being of about one bale of ideas per day. The quantity diurnally liberated hereabout is far below that standard."[2]

The color of the two months in Michigan, deeply affected as it is by thoughts about John, is faithfully reproduced in the succession of letters addressed to him.

(*To John*)

R. 1, Box 64 B,
Manistee, Michigan,
July 7, 1925.

Dear old Spuggins:

Your first Dunewood letter came this A. M. Now, old boy, don't answer this or the ones we wrote last night for ten days or two weeks unless you feel just like it! I'm awfully sorry if I have made you feel for a minute that you haven't written often enough. I didn't mean to. I think you have written famously. With amazing frequency.—I don't want you to write so often. I wouldn't raise your temperature $\frac{1}{10}$ of a degree for ten letters. Don't write so much. Don't be so clever! Just send a post card. "Am doing as well as could be expected" "John"—Like that, see? And as for the other 14 correspondents put $\frac{7}{8}$ of the letters into the bathtub, as A. France did, and have the tray-boy burn them. All with a good heart.—Don't give a thought to the bills. We'll have them sent directly. We are worrying about them. Certainly you should not. Don't worry about anything. Loaf and invite your soul. Don't hesitate to refuse to see visitors that

[1] July 6, 1925.
[2] July 9, 1925.

you don't want to see. Tell them you aren't up to it.—You will want to see some people. You will want to get some letters. But take a "high" tone, and send everything else to the devil, all quietly and serenely. Cultivate the "superiority complex"—you know what is good for you. Take it and nothing else, dear boy. All devotedly and affectionately,

FATHER.

(*To The Same*)

July 14, 1925.

. . . Your mother (with a little slight assistance from me) gave the canoe two coats of gay green paint and two of varnish. Yesterday was a good drying day. To-day we took her out, and in fairly rough and windy water went down to the second blueberry patch. She didn't leak a drop. We landed side on—on a steep beach, but came ashore dry. Got a quart and a half of blueberries. Built an Arabian-trench fire. Boiled coffee. Roasted wieners and sandwiches. Watched the night hawks diving. Smoked. Watched the sunset glow come over the dunes and tinge the tops of the pines in the swamp. Swamp colored pink and gold. Came home over the grey water with strong favoring swell behind us, and the rose-pink sun dropping down out of the blue-grey west.

We thought and talked often of you. Your mother remarked that you wouldn't have cared for the berry-trip. Of course what I'm always thinking is that old Spuggins will be blue to hear about this. Or "What will Spuggins think about this?"—As a matter of fact, I suppose you would find it rather dull here and much as usual. I don't care for much excitement myself; and if I had the stimulation of your intellectual and critical conversation I could be pretty content. However, . . .

(*To The Same*)

R. F. D. No. 1, Box 64 B,
Manistee, Mich.,
July 15, 1925.

DEAR OLD SPUGGINS:

Well, how is the old *philosophe* to-day? Have you read your chapter in Marcus Aurelius? In my own experience I have found

Marcus a wonderful sedative. I suppose, old boy, you are "nervous" because you are up. That is really an occasion for quiet cheer. But you need to take a little mental sedative along with the cheer.

I rather touched on this matter in the long letter that I wrote you last night. The great thing to get hold of now is patience and the long view and permanent health. You have had some of the quiet bed régime. Now you have come to the point where you will need to use your prudence and sagacity, and figure out a plan for wise occupation of yourself with wider limits of action.

It will be harder in one way, because you will feel more like doing things. Much more. But it is just now that the importance of being wise is most critical. You have to learn now the regimen of the man out of bed, half in and half out. You have to learn to improve and build up slowly and carefully for a long while. This is the time that recklessness might set you back where you began.

You know, just as well as I, that if this were a good place for you, we'd love to have you here. We haven't any expert counsel yet in favor of this place. Dr. Miller, to whom I suggested it, said not this summer. You know the board here is limited, the meat usually uneatable. The altitude is lower than Urbana. The air is very moist. It rains much, is raining now. There are no nurses and no doctors, and no conveniences of a sanatorium. Dr. Miller said we did not know enough to take care of you as you should be taken care of at this period.

You are, according to Dr. Miller, in charge of the best medical men in the West. They are to examine you and to prescribe from their special expert knowledge of the best treatment. From the first we have felt that we must not have anything but the best advice and oversight. And that is what Cragmor has meant to us, on the statement of the best man in New York. You see, dear Spuggin, why I have to urge you to use patience and your sagacity and foresight.

You and I and your mother all want exactly the same thing; we want you sound and well. And comparatively speaking, the time and patience you will have to put in on making a complete cure are as nothing—I mean compared with the results for your own happiness and the happiness of us all, to be achieved by

that effort of patience, and that expenditure of time just now.

You talk with Dr. Forster next time you see him. Tell him what is in your mind. Speak out freely to him and converse with him the way you would with me.

Don't let Bro. Bryan stir you up. Really I believe you are like your mother, in the way you let the last person who talks to you influence [you]. Try to be like the Old Man in this: that nobody outside influences him much. Except of course, dear Spuggin, you must give gentle ear to the influence of the Old Man's letters.—Don't let yourself get stirred up. I shall listen very faithfully and fondly to everything that you write. You never need to think that you are writing to a deaf ear. I'll discuss anything you wish. But tell me now next time you write, if this isn't a sensible and reasonable letter and in accord with your own best judgment.

By the way, you have never said yet whether you got that stamp collection. Perhaps you had better send to the Springs and get a couple of new records for the Victrola, and play them to yourself as David did to Saul. Frank gives us Mr. Boyer's report of a visit to you. He seems to have got a pleasant impression. All your visitors come away with a pleasant impression. And that always tickles my heart. I like to know that other people find you gracious and agreeable. Of course I know it. The confirmation, however, is sweet. I love you much. So does your mother. And we think of you and talk of you constantly. And you understand perfectly, I know, dear boy, that we can't wish anything but the best for you. I believe you are getting better there. That is the best thing in the world to me. Most affectionately,

FATHER.

(*To The Same*)

July 16, 1925.

. . . We all have our troubles of one sort and another. Mine for the last ten days has been trying to see my way through the dozen religious books I brought out with me. It doesn't seem to me that most of these religious people make very grand progress, and when an old Fundamentalist backs up and shouts for the whole Bible, old and unchanged, as the "Word of God" it

makes me tired of the whole lot. However, some of them have a fine spirit and are doing good work.—Last night I read Deuteronomy through and some of the Old Testament books, and all night had a tremendous attack of nightmares. The portion of the Bible which best suits my temper is the Gospel of John and the three Epistles of John. But I'm not sure whether you discriminate. . . .

(*To The Same*)

Dunewood, Manistee,
July 22, 1925.

Dear Spuggins:

Your mother has gone over to the Strohms to play bridge with the ladies. I am at home by my lone—except for a nice little wood fire. I haven't been out of the "yard" but once today, when I went up to the old garden for a stick of wood to start my evening fire. A note from Dan Longwell (of Doubleday's) started me to tinkering up an old Conrad article to serve as introduction to one vol. of a new Conrad edition they are bringing out in the fall. I re-read *Typhoon*, which is a very great tale. This time I was impressed by the quantity of dry humor in it. This tale of the stupid Englishman (or Scot) who goes steadily about his business though and while the heavens fall—the dramatic contrast between the imperturbable captain and the typhoon is quite superb. And then I reread "The Heart of Darkness," which shows what happens to a man after he has admitted Chaos into his own heart, where no officer or English gentleman should admit it, though Numidian lions roar about him, and he be sore afraid.—The ethical core of these books impresses me as wonderfully solid.—And though in a way you don't feel that it is of first-rate importance whether these "stupid" fellows get to port, still you feel in another way that everything in the world depends on these fellows getting to port.

If the foregoing sounds dull, you must remember that the Old Man feels precious dull up here most of the time. There aren't enough intellectual contacts *per diem* to start combustion in the engine. The only way to get up adequate heat is just to rotate the wheels over and over. And to initiate that

requires heat. If I had a story going, it would go under its own motion. This infernal critical writing requires steady pumping.

(*To The Same*)

R. F. D. No. 1, Box 64 B,
Manistee, Mich.,
August 1, 1925.

Dear Spuggins:

The letter that came from you this A. M. was very—comparatively speaking—jolly. You gave a considerable list of friends, of various names, whom you see in your perambulations, you gave a pulse of 70 and a temp. of 98, you spoke of literary projects, and in general you took the line which I am accustomed to commend to members of my family: "a positive and hopeful attitude to life."

I thought the subject of your essay immense: Saturnism. I'm not sure just what your line is. But I should think you had bards enough for one piece. A gay crowd! Do you know R. L. S.'s piece on Villon in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books?* I'm not sure what your principle of inclusion is. But you seem to be after the crowd who were bit with a considerable amount of *morbidezza.*

Somewhere in my works I have discussed the attraction which this group exerts over "young people," ahem! As we grow older, we take more to the group which finds sunlight, bread and butter, and sleep, and common life delectable.—Why this group spellbinds us when we are college boys seems to me one of the most interesting matters to be discussed—if one can get a point of view sufficiently detached.

I'm sorry I haven't my translation of Brousson. I never had the original but understand it not fit to be read by *virginibus puerisque.* Anatole was an old rake. Don't cultivate your mind in the direction of old rakishness. "Old rakishness" is a disease which is not specially becoming at 75 and much less so at 17! I feel that I am going far enough perhaps in ordering you a copy of Brigham Young!

I wish you would cultivate a taste for history, philosophy, and science—or one of the three! as a counterpoise to rakish

young poets and Bohemians. It seems more in line with your vigorous and masculine intelligence. Also some good critical literature would be timely—Arnold, Sainte-Beuve, etc.

I'm glad you are seeing something of Boyer. He is a mighty good fellow with lots of ideas and information.

I've been happy yesterday and to-day with occupation which hasn't required thinking. The entire proof of *Letters to a Lady in the Country* came, and I finished it to-night. It doesn't make a bad little book, I hope, for the fall book season. I think a good many of Garreta's letters contain some very nice writing: and some of mine I hope are readable.

(*To The Same*)

August 5, 1925.

. . . I spent the day trying to be clever in thinking up dialogue to put into my little paper on "Why the devil I went to New York." I say it over that way just to amuse myself. But it was a pretty problem to think up a frame and a tone which wouldn't make me sound like a conceited ass in talking about my private affairs in a magazine. I'm not dead sure I have got it yet but I've got something. In essays of the sort, everything is in the treatment. And that is true, indeed, of a great deal of writing of all sorts.—The classicists say that "the subject is everything." From some points of view a good subject does seem ¾ of the battle. But then, if you scrutinize the thing "metaphysically" *what is the subject?* Isn't "the treatment" really included in the *subject?* Do you know your subject till you know your treatment? In this: "Why the devil did I go to N. Y.?"—I didn't know my subject till I knew the mixture of sentiment and faint humor in which I design to answer the question. The specific answers are to the subject as the bones are to the flesh.

Life is like that. Its elementary terms are hardly worth discussing. What are they? Food, shelter, clothing.—One of the little Blue Books is a debate between Frank Harris and someone else on, "Is Life Worth Living?" Well, are food, shelter, clothing worth living for? Hardly! It all depends on the quantity of grace and gaiety and good humor and courage and variety and

wit and affection and gentleness and kindness and equanimity we can bring to play upon the business of feeding, housing, and clothing ourselves.

One essayist writes a brilliant article on "A Piece of Chalk." A story writer writes a famous one on "A Piece of String." There is a good deal of "treatment," if you wish to call it so, in that sort of performance.

(*To The Same*)

August 11, 1925.

. . . I finished to-day my very much labored article on going to New York—on which I was up till one last night; which explains why I turned over my letter to R. M. S.—I'm not at all sure that it is proper; but think it rather amusing. . . .

I was up to scratch as a writer yesterday. But that was the first day this summer. I think the moisture here settles in my sinuses. Nothing whatever the matter. Mostly laziness and lack of the push of the office. But now I'm feeling fit, I hope to be more productive.

Rascoe has written a nasty chapter of jibes at me in his *Dreiser*. Speaks of my "oily periods." What do you think of that?

(*To The Same*)

R. F. D. No. 1, Box 64 B,
Manistee, Mich.,
August 12, 1925.

Dear Spuggin:

Rain again, as *per ordinaire*. I've been a-settin' here reading Rascoe and Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*. Rascoe says I'm a liar and a plagiarist. *My Ántonia* is a tale of Bohemians in Nebraska. This P. M. your mother and the Drapers went to the 2nd Patch, and R. M. S. returned with 2 qts. of berries. This evening the Strohms played Bridge; which I find fatiguing, because I'd rather be reading Willa Cather.—Jacob Z. has been made a full professor. He is expected here Sunday. Astonishing to me to consider how completely the foregoing record clears up the

day's performances, so far as I am concerned.—Oh I've filled a lamp or so—and yesterday I filled five. No wonder the journalists say that a professor knows nothing whatever about life. Stickin' his nose in books, etc. But aren't the books of the last 1000 years as faithful a record of life as those of the last 20? That is a question I have never seen satisfactorily answered. To what extent do you "know about" life after you have read 500 pages about it?—I've never "been to war"; but I seem to have a good many notions about what it is, and what it feels like. Do I impress you as a person of singular ignorance about *life ?* When I was a younger person than now, I remember reading an article by Randolph Bourne, in which he rebuked Parents for interfering with their Children. He maintained that Parents ought to keep their hands off and let Life train them. In reviewing this book I remember saying that I had always considered Parents a part of Life, which might legitimately enough impinge to some extent upon the young, and for them to keep hands off would constitute a very curious and abnormal alteration of Life.—I present the matter for your consideration as a small item in the field of Logic or Philosophy.—Of course there is nothing personal in the reference here. I began to muse in this field a little as a consequence of some of to-day's reading on the wide naïve ignorance of professors.—I've learned now how to find the covered mail box partly up the Scott's path by the stars and the "spirit in my feet"—no matter how few stars and how much rain and darkness there may be in the bushes.—So long for to-night. I think there may be a slim chance of a letter from you in the A. M., but I'm not banking on it.—A good day to you,

Affectionately,

FATHER.

The next letter again refers to Burton Rascoe's desire to be attacked by him and his probable disappointment at not having his wish gratified and to Miss Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*, in which the interpretation of the ardors of the artistic spirit made him "weep with admiration." "There is more of the life of Genius," he says, "in one hundred pages of that book than in ten thousand of Dreiser. At least, I wouldn't trade at that ratio."[3]

[3]August 14, 1925.

In another he holds up to John examples of character for his imitation in Mrs. Ogden Reid and Professor Arthur Hamilton, a friend at Illinois: "She is a woman of much character, by which I mean, primarily, 'nerve,' grit. That is a quality one comes to admire more and more, as one sees how much of it is needed to get through the job. Combine it with a certain 'gaiety of heart,' and it's about the best human combination. Add grace and kindness, and you get fellows like Quint and R. L. S., who have a rare charm. From all accounts that come to me that is the direction of your development. I'm looking forward to your trying them on me before long. Meanwhile, I've got to put a little more grit into my writing arm, and turn out that next lecture."[4]

In the meantime Sherman was keeping in touch with the office in New York, first through Miss Garreta Busey, who was in charge while Mrs. Van Doren was away on her vacation, and then through the associate editor herself. The fact that he was, during these months, free from directorial responsibility made it possible for him to admire the summer issues of the review with a certain air of impartiality and to bestow credit generously upon his fellow workers. His letters to both these correspondents repeat the complaints about his dullness and his envy of those who remain near the big city. With the former he also had a special subject to discuss. Miss Busey had taken her doctorate under Sherman at Illinois and had assisted him in one of his courses. Under his encouragement she had also cultivated her gift for creative writing. She was his collaborator in *The Letters to a Lady in the Country* which were now being prepared for publication in a book. As "Paul" and "Caroline" they had set themselves a pretty problem in triangular relations. The solution of the problem was hardly performed with mathematical precision. The conventional truth triumphed without being put to a very thorough test. In the last letter of the series "Paul" thus vindicates the wisdom of the world: "When a man begins to divide his affection, which we all admit is inexhaustible, doesn't he infallibly, in the real world, begin also to divide his car, or need a second one, and to divide his ponies, or buy a third one, and to distribute his jewels or go to the expense of ad-

[4]August 25, 1925.

ditional emeralds? Yes or no? And don't you, when you walk around the 'case' in that way, find that, instead of running into 'flimsy conventions,' you bump solid and hard into economics and physics?" Of less importance than this solution is the exploitation in the correspondence of personal longings and romantic moods. They are of deeply subjective interest and a valuable record of Sherman's inner life. "I want as long as possible," he said, in explaining his anonymity, "to remain two persons: it is truer to life! If I were seven, it would be still truer."[5]

The letters of this summer to Miss Busey are in a way an extension of the "fictional" correspondence, though the rôles are sharply modified.

(*To Garreta Busey*)

Route 1, Box 64 B,
Manistee, Michigan,
July 14, 1925.

DEAR GARRETA:

First many thanks for sending on the mail—not that it amounted to much, praise be, except for your own letter. Do not think, however, that I am rejoicing in the woods and emancipation. Far from it. Not a day has gone by that I haven't sighed for N. Y. and the office. Nature has lost her charms for me—at present. I enjoyed the "slavery" more than this liberty. The sudden *torpor* of the woods for the first week has been appalling. It gave me a sense that I never again should be able to write a paragraph. There was a sense that all wires were down, all stimulus to consciousness over and one was "cut off."—Your budget had an effect of partial restoration. (It was happily accompanied in the same mail by a letter from Cragmor from John saying that he had just spent his first day out of bed, after ten days without a temperature.)

"Books" also came to-day. It was as interesting as ever. It was so good that of course it affected me with jealousy to see how little it mattered whether I had a hand in it or not. Of course the *last page* seemed especially excellent! Then I read through your letter again carefully and slowly and was more

[5]To Mr. M. E. Perkins, November 13, 1924.

than ever impressed with its depths and its beauty. I think we shall have a rather good little book, whether the populace likes it or not.[6] You have put some very nice things into it. In one fashion or another, we must go on with this in the fall. I mean with the expression of the imaginative life; and I mean especially that you must go on with it. . . .

In spite of the low state of his own spirits the letters are mostly occupied with an effort to lighten the mood through which his correspondent was then passing. "I wish," he writes, "you would get over the habit of speaking of anything in New York as ugly. Try to be just gay and glad.—Your chuckling as you walk along the street would be a good sign if you were going to edit the column of Don Marquis. But it's not much good for poetry. You must overcome this purely subjective mirth—too 'introverted.' Try to extravert your introversions."[7]

This is the burden of the admonition and encouragement in the letters that follow.

(*To Garreta Busey*)

Route 1, Box 64 B, Manistee, Mich.,
July 29, 1925.

Dear Garreta:

Thanks for your note of this morning's mail (enclosing the contract). The "concomitant" remittance of office mail evidently loitered by the wayside.

I have several times thought on what cheerful message I could send you regarding the deceased horses, which seemed so to affect your spirit. Perhaps there isn't any. Perhaps you

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[6]Sherman was not a little annoyed at the coldness toward this book evinced by some of his friends. To John he writes (August 16, 1925): "Jacob and Quint don't care much for them [*The Letters*]. Encouraging to an author. I've written the stuff of three books this year. They seem to feel that I ought to have used my time *to do something*. Encouraging.—It gives one a fine sense of freedom when one doesn't really care what people say about one's activities. All the same few people get so *free* that they don't rather like a moderate amount of approval from their friends. Probably it's as well that they don't. It serves as a sort of guide rope up Half Dome."

[7]July 23, 1925.

should come away from them with the intensified sense of *actuality*. You remember bragging a while back, of your relish of actuality, even purchased by some pain. . . .

Your letter did not sound "homesick" to me; but "descriptive," like the shorter of your last two poems. You should guard a little against over-cultivation of the descriptive mood—in your mental states. *Try to make something occur* even in talking about the stream of consciousness.—At present, something has occurred. You have finished your opera. You have killed Caroline. You are sitting in an office and walking along streets, and *simply looking at things*. This makes you melancholy, because it keeps you passive. The temporary cessation of your stream of mental activity gives you a sense of emptiness and inefficiency—and you call that homesickness, which it isn't at all. It's just the whirr of a powerful dynamo with no adequate hills to climb.—I give you this in an authoritative tone, because I know!—The difference in my case is that I have a whole series of hills, and no spark. . . .

In seasons of such weather (called "calm" by the poets, "dull" by honest prose writers) when inland far we be, it is necessary to resort to the grand consolatory guff about the fallow ground. Or perhaps one may work over that fine old ballad of the captain's daughter—you remember the captain kissed his daughter, and they spoke in better cheer, and they landed safe in harbor when the moon was shining clear. What caused this optimistic change of front? Why, his little daughter took his "icy hand" and asked the captain, who had just bellowed "We are lost!" whether "God was not in Michigan just the same as in New York City."

With best wishes,
STUART.

(*To The Same*)

R. 1, Box 64 B.,
Manistee, Mich.,
August 2, 1925.

DEAR GARRETA:

. . . Just between you and me, I am rather astonished to see the quantity of nature and human nature that have contrived

to get themselves recorded in the collection—and also at the extent of the story-element that develops after you come in. Just as it begins to get heavy it begins to grow light, etc., etc.

In re-reading it, I have taken in a lot of subtleties in your letters which I hadn't fully taken in before—and beauties. I'm struck with the "symbolic" value of a good many of your passages. The letter: "Rushing down from the tops of the mountains" is quite stunning from that point of view.

Then there are some notes—grace notes, notes of gentleness and kindness, which particularly take me always, in literature. They are rather rare there. They are good notes to use.

The letter in which Jim describes his horse's behavior seems to me very fine.

The thunderstorm letter is of course very purple.

The letter which begins with Caroline's groping around the house for something to read, do, etc.—and then goes out doors strikes me as pretty near high-water mark.

But then so is the last one. It stands re-reading; and its close gives just exactly the effect that I hoped you would give.—On me, at any rate, its effect is: re-reading. It has a reverberation, and it is felt retroactively in a most desirable fashion.

O yes, I should speak, too, of your *first letter*—I had forgotten how good that was.

Have you had any ideas for fall-developments? Have you done anything with your novel? Have you recovered from your blueness about the deceased horses?

I have been in an indigo vat since I came here; but the copy of the *New Yorker* gave me a grip on the rim, and I'm hoping eventually to pull out.

Best wishes to you all.

STUART.

(*To The Same*)

Sept. 4, 1925.

. . . And now that business has been disposed of, I remark with lively pleasure and interest the restoration of your normal high spirits by a "glint in the day." A professional author

should not be subject to glints in the day. A professional author should carry her sky about with her—should be rain-proof, frost-proof, temperature-proof within!—However, you are now getting the compensation for you climatic susceptibility. Make the best of it! And pray for good weather! But what a subjection! What abjectness before the visible world! The penalty of the "descriptive poet."—Now if something *epical* is *going on*—an act under way, real navigators of the stream of time *make naught of weathers*.

This is what Ruth calls "scolding." But I'm not scolding. I'm simply making a background for the appreciation of your "projects." I observe with satisfaction that your "projects" are beginning to swarm. That is a sign full of promise. I am eager to hear what some of them are. When you turn on the world and begin to do something to it, then the *fun* begins, in earnest, so to speak. . . .

To Mrs. Van Doren the letters are chiefly about matters connected with the review and preserve a note of respectful deference, almost as though they were written to an official superior, though they are not without warmth and have also that slight tincture of mockery needful to keep them within the sphere of personal intimacy.

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

Route 1, Box 64 B, Manistee, Mich.,
July 29, 1925.

Dear Irita:

Julian's letter came two or three days before yours. It was a "perfectly dear" letter. In almost if not quite extravagant terms he said how well we had done, etc. He spoke of the "mechanical perfection" of the work which had been done this last month in absence of the director. Of course all this was due entirely to you. He referred to his long conference with you. I take it that his letter was written with the glow of that conference on him. Of course I wrote back that I would accept what he had said *in full* so far as you were concerned in it. And

so far as I was concerned, it did please me to see how nice Mr. Julian is.

The numbers of "Books" which have come here have been almost my only connection with the real world, except an occasional note from Garreta, who obviously misses you badly. I think even Pat has been pining a little over your absence. I had a note from her, too, at the time you were in N. Y. for a couple of days; and she, even she, was touched with the afterglow.

The "Books" seemed very good indeed. I was much impressed by the illustrations in all of them. I liked much the two poems by Frank Hill and —— the other one on the same page by Louis Untermeyer: "Common Miracle." I liked Krutch's article and Parshley's. I was greatly tickled by Pat's review of the Indian woman's letters. She does just that sort of thing beautifully. I admired your Pre-Raphaelite number—the ensemble, without reference to my own poor part in it. I mean your illustrations, and the harmonious composition of the various reviews. There was a manifest spirit at work throughout it—yours.

It was a pleasure to hear of your swimmings and preservings and siestas, so that one was able to envisage the entire ménage recuperating, reinvigorating, tanning and drinking in sunshine and drawing up chlorophyll and peace, and communing with earth—so that one didn't have to worry, for the moment, about anything specially calamitous.—When I expressed a little anxiety, along toward the end of the first month, when I hadn't heard a word, it was suggested to me that you didn't wish to be bored by writing to me or hearing from me. I was presented to myself as a kind of burden and affliction from which you were happily now free. In accordance with this hint, I have made this letter short, and have not sent it till your return to the office will enable you to handle it as routine. I thought perhaps, however, that as it had reference mainly to the paper, it might now be sent without serious intrusion upon the editorial peace.

I was grateful to you also for your news about Helen and the Pilgrim. If I can get my spirits again to a decent level I hope to write Helen a letter about the rather heartbreaking book she sent me on the day the child was born.

STUART.

(*To The Same*)

R. F. D. No. 1, Box 64 B,
Manistee, Michigan,
August 9, 1925.

DEAR IRITA:

Well, I'm sorry you were interrupted by so many interviews in the midst of the "shaking" you had just begun to administer to me; but I can't refrain from adding that I seem to have been *quite* right in my conjecture, namely, that my letters would receive some attention when they became "part of the routine of the office." By myself I produce no effect. As one of thirty applicants for attention, I got 1-30 of the time at the disposal of the Editor for applicants. Never at any time have I raised a shadow of doubt regarding your Efficiency. . . .

. . . I suppose all the letters and notes I have written this summer to people in the office expressing envy of their happier "station in life" have appeared to them deeply tainted with *insincerity*. As a matter of fact I have repeatedly been on the actual verge of packing out of here.

The check in each case has been the knowledge that the two or three things which have to be done were not done; and that if I went back *via* Colorado into that incomplete mess of moving, the Lord knew whether they would ever be done.—But let us not dwell upon the seamy side of my ruminations. . . . However others may feel, I shall be very happy to return, and have a regular job on my hands all the time, with no margin for meditation between.

I have been refreshed, even by your business letters. In writing this one, I have tried to keep George Eliot in mind as an example of correct vocabulary and grammar. But I fear that it has insensibly prolonged itself quite beyond the limits allowable in editorial correspondence. This last paragraph, for example, might have been omitted.

STUART.

There is not a little in these letters about the review which Mrs. Van Doren had asked Sherman to send in of Burton Rascoe's book on *Dreiser*—a book in which a chapter is devoted to

arguing that Sherman is a liar, a plagiarist, a toady, and an ignoramus. Sherman expressed his distaste for carrying on a controversy on that plane. To a remonstrance from Mrs. Van Doren he replied with a rhetorical turn that he was peculiarly fond of. When some severity of his uttered in downright earnestness was objected to, he justified it as a particularly subtle specimen of "elusive humor." And so in this case: "I have your note suggesting that my tone about B. R. was peevish. I must reassure you. I had forgotten you had known me only a few months altogether. The epistle of mine which produced that bad impression was a specimen of my somewhat elusive humor. I thought while I was writing it: 'How pained this sounds!' I also thought: 'What a poor response to these two friendly notes.' Ordinarily I am not very humorous, but this summer seems to have struck a rich vein! Please disregard, Partner, everything in it that does not strike you as perfectly funny."[8]

There were other editors besides Mrs. Van Doren hot on Sherman's tracks this summer—Mr. Bridges of *Scribner's Magazine*, for whom he was composing confessions on his "change of life"; Mr. McNitt, who in *McNaught's Monthly* for August published a caustic paper by Sherman on the Scopes case; and Mr. Sedgwick, who would not give up hope of getting from him another book like *My Dear Cornelia*. To the urgings and proddings of the last Sherman sent the following reply.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

R. F. D. No. 1, Box 64 B,
Manistee, Michigan,
August 15, 1925.

My dear Sedgwick:

You are a very stimulating person, and since I have left the sure academic treadmill which keeps one in motion with no commotion, I find an increasing craving for stimulus, though I have not yet taken to stimulants. Also I seem to be becoming "temperamental"—a state which I view with horror, identifying it with a disposition not to work when one doesn't feel like it.

[8]August 14, 1925.

As I have not felt in the least like work for the last month and a half, I have done precious little. My hope of getting a new good sized project in motion this summer I think will go glimmering.

How'd you like a little piece on "Blueberrying (in Michigan)"? It sounds sort of New Englandy and old-style *Atlantic*. I've written a short sketch of an essay, which I might produce if desired to do so. I suppose the design would be to make myself interesting in connection with blueberries and these woods and the lake which I have loved so much these past dozen years. We are talking now of selling our place up here, as it doesn't seem likely ever to be suitable again for my boy to come here. We had to take him out of Harvard at the spring recess and send him to Colorado.—I begin to feel blueberries and all this tract of life through "the pathos of distance."—I haven't the slightest desire to recommend this essay to you. I mention it only as a response to your stimulus. You know, I think, how much I enjoy writing for you, and perhaps you will propose a topic less traditional.

With best regards,
Sincerely yours,
STUART P. SHERMAN.

At the suggestion of this letter Mr. Sedgwick profanely exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be damned! You are a hustling knickerbocker, running a rapid fire daily of the modernest type, and I am an up-country editor, living by the quiet shallows. But when I ask for heroics, you give me—huckleberries. I will admit I was never so let down in my life as when your second paragraph followed your first. Why?

"I will take that paper on Blueberries with pleasure. That's all right, of course, but it is nothing to masticate. What I want is something solid to bite on—the beginnings of a book. We must follow up Cornelia. But I thought that the least you would say was that you had three fifths (the fraction does not really matter) of a novel written, or else 'How would it do to print a series elevating Fundamentalism to the intellectual plane and illustrating it dramatically in terms of human nature'. . . . That you should produce another book as precious as Cornelia would

be a grand thing for us, and for the Sherman family the best since W. T. took Atlanta."[9]

In the latter part of August Sherman, with Mrs. Sherman, the Hamiltons, and the Zeitlins, took a strenuous canoe trip, lasting three days, down the Manistee River. It did more to revive his spirits than anything he had done all summer. His pleasure in that trip he described in acknowledging one of Mr. Spingarn's "Amenia Leaflets" which was related in interest to his own experience. The opening paragraph refers to an earlier letter in which Mr. Spingarn had written: "May I also say how much my fancy is tickled at seeing you espouse in Sinclair Lewis all the ideas which you recoiled from in horror in H. L. Mencken? For if a philosopher, or a philosophy, is behind every artist . . . surely Mencken is the 'philosopher' behind Lewis, from the theory of 'boobs' and Rotarians to the theory of medical research."[10] In his answer Sherman had said there was "quite a bit" in that, adding, "But each of these two men, and all other writers, have a tone and atmosphere and total spirit and influence which are more or less independent of their 'philosophy' and yet quite as considerable an element in our reaction to them."[11] This, Mr. Spingarn declared, summed up his own philosophy of art more succinctly than he had ever been able to do, and he thereupon claimed Sherman as his "latest and most distinguished convert."

(*To Joel E. Spingarn*)

Dunewood, Manistee, Michigan,
September 5, 1925.

DEAR SPINGARN:

The literary "theory" which you allude to in my last letter is also very "grau" in my memory. I've even forgotten what the two books were, which seem to have been the occasion of some happily conciliating remark. None the less, I am willing to be saluted as a "convert." The word signifies that one has learned something, and it connotes improvement. What more can one ask?

[9]August 24, 1925.
[10]April 10, 1925.
[11]April 23, 1925.

On the other hand, and in the way of reciprocity, perhaps I'll have to claim you as a convert to my "cult of the soil." The unction with which you use that faintly Ruskinian phrase "a single spot of American earth" is very delightful to me!

"Four Days on the Webetuck River" is a charming leaf from the Troutbeck forest.

It happened, or did it *happen*, to come straight to my number. It came so pat that I suspected someone of tipping you off the nature of my latest vacation exercise. It arrived immediately after my return from a fairly exciting three-days canoe trip on the Manistee River, estimated here at 150 miles. Our river here is exceedingly serpentine and vermiculous, and navigators reckon the water-course at three times the distance by land. We drove fifty miles, and then put our three canoes into the water, and paddled, across two dams and one log jam with heavy portages, to the outlet of the Manistee in Lake Michigan.

I'm inclined to take up river navigation as the major sport of my declining years. It's the best method I've yet discovered for forgetting the world. It was, by the way, Thoreau's books primarily which kindled my passion for rivers—a passion suppressed now for ten years, and now released. If the Webetuck is still navigable, perhaps I may "check up" this narrative of Charles Benton's one of these days; and then I can give you a postscript for a new edition.

Your sense that all is not well with me doesn't appear to be justified by my individual state, but I had a hard blow this spring in my son, whom I was obliged to take out of Harvard and send to Colorado for his health. I am going out to see him next week—with fairly good cheer from a recent report of marked improvement.

I hope you are now on the high road. Your letter has at any rate a mild Epicurean note as of one who is rather enjoying his life, and the reflections of his mind—a little in the manner of that wise man Montaigne, past the season of stress and storm. There is nothing better—except three or four days now and then on a swift river. The two in contrast: perhaps that is best of all.

With best wishes,
Very sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

He alludes to the canoe trip also in a letter to Mrs. Van Doren: "I have seldom been less bored in my life than on that trip. The chance occurring every five minutes for three days that one would be capsized, stove a hole in the boat, and paddling in the middle of the current effectively drive 'dull care away.' It confirms me in my discovery that excitement is a necessary element in every well-regulated life." He speaks of looking forward to doing his part in "the world's work," saying: "I haven't been thoroughly satisfied with this vacation. But I have got out of the curious settled gloom of the first month. I have acquired some tan, and a rather hard grip in the hands. I hope I shall be useful in the office, and as pleasant as can be expected from one of my temperamental inclination."[12] In the last of the vacation letters to Mrs. Van Doren there is the breath of eager expectation at the prospect of renewing his active "campaign."

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

Dunewood, Manistee, Michigan,
Sept. 4, 1925.

DEAR IRITA:

Yesterday I sent you "Willa Cather." I have had no inspiration for a sub-title: I suppose you couldn't get "Willa Cather's // Farewell to Professorial America" on two lines. (In proofreading, by the way, watch for substitution of *professional* for professorial. They *always* do it.)

I am conscious that you may be obliged to prune a little. I am very keen about the subject, and was most anxious to get said what I have said, and to use the material as adequately as I could. Of course as I was developing a "thesis" there was no room at all for appreciating subordinate matters or handling any detail. I think you will understand that my prime object was the definition of "our" attitude towards new times, new literature, etc., etc. Willa Cather seems to me to give quite the *best occasion* afforded by any of the significant movement novellists in American literature. With her *dominant* ideas and motives I have always been sympathetic. (I underscore like a

[12]September 1, 1925.

young girl, because I am so anxious to have you also clear about it.)

The revised copy of this article was written between 8 and 12:20 yesterday, while Ruth stood over me with a stick and pulled my golf stockings on while I was writing and shaving and Edwin [Draper] was honking his car on the road. Consequently, I haven't reread it. I remember now a little additional paragraph about ¾ inch long, containing an additional appreciation of the *Song of the Lark*. "No novel has stirred me so profoundly." That could be cut out without loss of blood. But into thy hands I commend my spirit. —Don't let me make M. Fuller die *nine years ago*, my dear. It was longer than that.

. . . By the way, did you read the letter Spingarn sent me with his latest "Amenia Leaflet"? I've forgotten whether that had been read in the office. He really seems to think "Books" is a great success. If he does, that is another palm from the Enemy, who are the only true givers of palms.

I enclose another photo from the famous River-Trip. This is on an island or promontory in the river, and was taken in a 15-minute rest-interval after a long pull over dead-water. Isn't Jacob sweet?

I wonder if Pat is back. If so, please give her my salaam, and tell her that I am counting each moment till I see her again.

A note from Garreta indicates that she is standing tiptoe with interest in her new ideas and enterprises. You have probably been administering champagne. It's curious the amount of intensity there is in some of these still girls.

As for me, I am not, as you know, an intense creature, but a very phlegmatic scow. But I am, in my pedestrian way, looking forward to this year's campaign with, for me, high interest. I "look forward" much more than I did last year. With you, to furnish ideas and inspiration at all times to all people, it seems to me the prospects are good. I don't see why we can't bring "Books" even farther towards the front than we got her last year, do you?—growing in grace and favor with gods and men. Let's! It's a silly thing to say to *you*. It means merely that I'll try to make the scow as useful to you as I can. As for you, you don't need inspiration and encouragement: you are it—they, whatever you like.

STUART.

Whenever I think of what you have done this summer, and I loafing under duress off here, I am remorseful for myself, and endlessly proud of you—and together with pride, there are all sorts of supplementary emotions thrown in.

Sherman left Dunewood on September 7th, traveling to Colorado Springs to have a few days with John before returning to New York. An account of his visit to the sanatorium is given in a letter to his mother.

(*To Mrs. Ada P. Sherman*)

52 Jane Street, New York City,
Sept. 22, 1925.

DEAR MOTHER:

Your letter caught me duly at Col. Springs—with its order to write. The facilities for writing weren't specially good there. I was sleeping in one of John's two rooms, and they were a little cluttered (with his books and papers, for which he hasn't adequate space); and I had no stationery or stamps; and we were five miles from town, etc., etc., etc, etc.

Cragmor is on a little tableland or mesa about 5 mi. from the Rock Island Station at Col. Springs. There is a big sanitarium building, a number of auxiliary buildings, and a sprinkling of cottages, constituting a little settlement up there in the hills. The air is very clear and fine. Pretty cool already. I took my meals on tray, with opportunity to see just what the regular run of patient's fare was for three days. It was pretty good. The boys grumbled a good deal; but that was partly humor.

One of the doctors took me to the laboratory and showed me the new X-ray photo. . . . About a year from now John thinks he might go to Arizona for a year—not necessarily in a sanitarium.—At any rate, we are looking forward to about two years more before we consider whether and where he may go back to college,—possibly Leland Stanford.

John is taking it very sweetly and manfully. Not a word of complaint. We had some good talk. He has a number of friends in the Home—Princeton boy in the next room, Harvard instructor on the floor above, a number of girls. —— is pretty low —had a hemorrhage while I was there. They call that "spitting rubies"; tell that to Kath. Her ghoulish taste will enjoy it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE LAST YEAR

ON THE train, returning from Colorado, Sherman made an effort to forget the world by applying himself to Proust who, he decided, was "rather great." One result of what he saw in Cragmor was to give him an extraordinary sympathy with the experience and the writings of Mr. Llewellyn Powys. His review of *Skin for Skin* in "Books" for October 18, 1925, shocked a good many readers because it accepted the truth of the cruel, naked, savage vision of life revealed in that book. It is not strange that, coming from a place where with his sensitive imagination he had seen the struggle for life going on in a desolating form, and his only son involved in it, he should have felt the authenticity of Mr. Powys's report to his very marrow. The surprising thing rather is that he should have written of it with as much control and balance as he did. For he only offered it as a point for *beginning* the reconstruction of a personal philosophy that should be truly realistic. In his next article he composed the needful complement, coming back to Robert Louis Stevenson as a man who, like Powys, admitted the "wickedness, selfishness, disease and horrible fascination at the heart of life," but devoted himself to the "elaboration of therapy" and fashioned a heartening music out of its materials. There remained for Sherman other and richer ways of accepting life than Mr. Powys's. There was Chekhov's way, for instance,[1] and there was Montaigne's way, to which he devoted a delightful essay at the end of the year, declaring that to a man of his age and temper it was perhaps the most delectable of the "three or four principal ways of accepting the universe." "It admits one to a point of view with a wide and serene prospect, and to a mood which is agreeably various yet essentially resolute, and to a companionable quest for a life with 'a pure

[1]See "Books," November 15, 1925.

and agreeable savour.'" But its validity for Sherman rested also on its "truth-telling about the animal basis of human nature."[2] "I'm not sure," he said, speaking again of the Powys essay, "that you can't put the gospel of John on top of the edifice. John certainly is my own favorite among the mystics."[3]

The house in which Sherman settled on arriving in New York was at 52 Jane Street. It was a very commodious residence and had been made attractively livable. On the ground floor, looking out on a plot of flowers which Mrs. Sherman had planted in the back yard, there was a large square study, provided with a fireplace, the walls lined with shelves reaching to the ceiling and packed solidly with books, giving him a more homelike feeling than he had enjoyed on Morningside Heights. As for the neighborhood, he wrote to his mother, "The street is not elegant, but as a journalist—not in society—I don't care. The guide book says Alexander Hamilton died on this street. If it was good enough for him to die on, perhaps it is good enough for us to live on."[4] There was besides a certain atmosphere in the locality which he referred to in one of the "New Letters to a Lady": "I buy a newspaper of a Russian. In the barbershop where I had my hair cut this morning nobody spoke anything but the language of Dante. The police and the political atmosphere of my street are glamorous with 'Keltic magic.' A few blocks east there is a shop which sells only Spanish novels and perfumery. When I step out in the morning for my cream bottle the air is magnificently tonic and Caribbean with the aroma of roasting coffee. The liners dock a couple of cables' length away; and all through the night, if I am awake, I can hear their hoarse, romantic bellow, putting out over the wintry sea for Italy, Spain, Egypt."[5]

He had hardly got settled in his new home when an attempt was made upon his peace of mind by a suggestion from Professor F. L. Pattee that he allow himself to be named for the presidency of Pennsylvania State College. It left him unexcited, only giving him a chance to explain how well satisfied he was with the work he was doing.

[2]"Books," December 27, 1925; reprinted in *The Main Stream.*

[3]Letter to Miss Isabel Jones, November 22, 1925.

[4]September 22, 1925.

[5]"Books," January 12, 1926.

(*To F. L. Pattee*)

52 Jane Street,
New York City,
September 30, 1925.

DEAR PATTEE:

Your letter pleases me immensely of course. How could it fail to do so?—as a mere confidence between you and me, your side of our mutual good opinions! And I won't let it go any further.

But so far as I can predict on the basis of my present state of mind, I shall not be candidate for any presidential office. If I don't fail in the vocation which now absorbs me, I do not expect to revert to the academic walks.

In a way, this job is harder than teaching. That is why I like it—one reason why. It may kill me in a year or so. In a sense, I don't care very much if it does. So long as it lasts, and I last, I have a chance to *use* what I've got. What more can we ask for? It's a very interesting opportunity which I have now and my heart is thoroughly in it.

Along in November an article which I wrote last summer will appear in one of the magazines (*Scribner's*), expressing what I feel nowadays about what you call "the academic prison-house" versus "the primrose way."

When I look beyond the primrose way to other paths, they lead my eye toward blue hills which I've never yet had leisure to explore. I may never reach them. But there are no Deans or Presidents on them! . . .

Sherman seems to have relished his second year in New York even more intensely than the first. While continuing his visits to theaters and picture galleries he apparently did a greater variety of things, presented himself at more functions, saw more interesting people, acted as judge, with Dean Wilbur Cross and Mr. Ferris Greenslet, on the Pulitzer Poetry Committee, and also served on the Committee of Award for prizes for the best Negro poetry, given by *Opportunity*. He did more lecturing than in the previous year, succumbing several times to the temptation of a generous honorarium. On October 24th he addressed the Boston Women's Club on "Romance Up-to-

Date," taking for his text the novels of Mrs. Edith Wharton, Miss Ellen Glasgow, and Miss Willa Cather, and pointing out what new values these writers had discovered in women's lives. On November 17th he traveled to Detroit and delivered to a convention of teachers an address called "Shaping Men and Women," a characteristic declaration of his vital creed as a teacher. He repeated the address at Buffalo on his way home. In New York he spoke to a group at Teachers College and at a dinner of the New York Library Association. On December 1st he appeared before the Rotarians and treated them to a brilliant address on the importance to society of encouraging freedom in its writers. With admirable adroitness he penetrated into the inner sanctum of Philistinism and good-humoredly took possession of the works.[6] That was the last lecture he delivered for some time. A few weeks earlier, in declining such an invitation from Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe, he had said: "I have solemnly sworn to myself to quit after December 1st and to do no more this year. I haven't time to compose them, for I can't bring myself to deliver a lecture which hasn't been prepared for the audience at which it is to be fired."[7]

He violated this resolve, however, to take part in a symposium at one of the dinners of the *Nation*, March 18th, taking for his subject, "Is Criticism of Any Use?" And in May, at the urgent desire of Mrs. Ogden Reid and the Scribners, he went out to St. Louis to tell a gathering of booksellers of the vast public that existed in this country for books and of how it might be reached.[8]

Most of these activities come in for some kind of description or comment either in the letters to John or in the "New Letters to a Lady." His work on the Pulitzer Poetry Prize bears fruit in a list of the "best" poets of the year, with this reflection added: "My point about the poets is that almost none of them pretends to poetize the whole of life. Wisely or not, most of them 'condition' themselves to respond poetically to a very limited set of stimuli. 'Come,' says Amy Lowell, 'I will make

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[6]This address was worked over and published in *McNaught's Monthly*, February, 1926, with the title "Stuart Sherman to Business Men Only."

[7]November 8, 1925.

[8]"Finding the Intelligent Public and Enlarging It," *Publishers' Weekly*, May 29, 1926.

you a poem out of two beads or out of sunlight, three marigolds and a dusky, purple poppy bud.' Most of them do their conjuring in a mask, and they play with one pattern. They operate with two or three colors; two or three moods; three or four tunes sung over and over again. When they try something else the spell snaps, the charm is gone. One of them always conjures in sunlight with flowers and bright dyes; one works with vinegar and stone, husks, rust, and the worm i' the shroud; one with a wash of dream music and soft dancing; one with sharp hunger and cold and a warm blue fairy cloak dropped over her shoulders out of a whirling storm. Each knows his jewels.

"Well, there you are! Trust the poets. Do you see what I mean? Each one of us has a little set of relationships in which he pleases himself and others. Outside of them he flounders and gropes."[9]

There is a considerable contrast between the emotional effect upon him of the *Nation* dinner and the *Opportunity* dinner. Of the former he writes in somewhat blasé fashion as an affair "public to all those provided with $2.50 but apparently frequented mainly by literati and intellectuals, so very young that at thirty-one I felt patriarchal. The subject of the evening, announced by Mark Van Doren, was 'Is Criticism Important?' The discussion was jolly as long as Hendrik Van Loon, a humorous Dutch giant, was telling stories as amusing as his drawings. He compared the critic, I recall, with a sheep appraiser who dazzled companions in a train by declaring at a glance that in a pasture just passed there were 377 sheep. Asked how he did it, he replied that he counted the legs and divided by four. After half an hour of droll stories Harrison Smith, representing the publishers, rose and remarked that two of Van Loon's stories he had heard before. Then he read a serious paper proving that criticism is a good thing. The editor of "Books" rose and did likewise, relieving his solemnity only by a paragraph of jibes at the English, which were properly resented by Rebecca West and S. K. Ratcliffe, who were also at the speaker's table. They rose and with spirit challenged the speaker. There was a little debate. For me, the stories and the personal vivacities

[9] "Books," March 14, 1926.

were all there was to the symposium that was memorable."[10]

The other affected him much more powerfully. "I wish you could have been here Saturday night for the award dinner of *Opportunity*, the journal of Negro life. It was the most enthusiastic literary group I have seen in New York. It looked distinctly 'younger generation'—especially, of course, the Borden High School chorus, which between awards sang spirituals celestially well.

"There were a few friendly palefaces visible: John Macy, a kindly, white-headed eagle, presiding jointly with Charles S. Johnson, editor of *Opportunity;* Blanche Colton Williams; the beaming blue eyes and white head of Carl Van Vechten, and Clement Wood demonstrating that he could sing 'All God's Chillun' as well as Paul Robeson.

"But Paul Robeson himself, in his rumbling bass, announced the prizes for playwriting; Nathaniel Dett played one of the winning musical compositions; and Alain Locke was there, and James Weldon Johnson; and to judge from the fine, courteous excitement, the big 'audience' was mainly composed of young contestants and their friends. There were over 1200 entries from 'all over God's hebbun'—Brooklyn, New Mexico, Boston, Virginia, Paris—and it did one's heart good to hear the bursts of applause when any name was mentioned which was recognized as having added distinction to the movement—such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen; and then there was a Mathias from Virginia whose name repeatedly came up for prizes or honorable mention."[11]

In connection with his appearance in St. Louis he confesses that though, theoretically, he feels some of Coriolanus's scorn at showing himself to the people, practically he enjoys "as much as any member of the Monday Club seeing the flesh and blood source of a celebrated name." He not only gives an account of the notables who appeared on the program but describes with delight the freshness of the country that moved by the train window: "I am in St. Louis. How did I get here? Through avenues of white and pink dogwood and the tenderest young green of the year mantling the red of old brick houses,

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[10] "Books," March 28, 1926.

[11] *Ibid.*, May 9, 1926.

creeping over stone walls, flashing against the yellow of clay banks, leaning up against the silver gray boards of old bridges, covering in the cinders of the embankments up to the very rails. It was so altogether and irresistibly lovely that all the way out hardened traveling men in the smoking compartment, instead of telling tales, sat with their chins in their hands staring out the window at Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, exclaiming at intervals, with a fervently religious intaking of breath: 'Good Lord, isn't it beautiful!' And in the silence at one of the stops I heard one woman carol, 'What a lovely country!' and a second woman instantly replying, 'What a lovely *world!*' I stared southward, muttering, '*Die Erde hat mich wieder*,' and went to St. Louis."[12]

To John he gives a report of attending such formal banquets as that of the Interparliamentary Union or that of the American Historical Association, or a luncheon at the Century Club in honor of the Prince of Sweden. He also tells him of some informal parties. There was one given by Sinclair Lewis at which "the sobriety was fair," when the author of *Babbitt* promised Sherman, while disrobing in his bedroom with his sitting room full of guests, to begin some new work "for the glory of God." Mencken was to have been at this party but in the end refused to leave Baltimore, whether because he knew Sherman was to be there does not appear.[13] There was another at which the men were "mostly middle-aged fellows—bald, spectacled, grizzled, worn, anxious," but the girls were "gay, slim, little young things, with bobbed hair and skirts to their knees; and they looked as if their 'fathers' had seen to it that they should not have a care in the world."[14] Of such parties he wrote to John: "How these owls stand up under it I can't guess. I am quite done in by midnight. . . . I prefer *à deux* conversations immensely to crowds. Something gets accomplished under these conditions."[15] Hence it is always with pleasure that he refers to a luncheon with Sherwood Anderson, or a sensible talk with Mr. McNitt, or a gossip with Mr. Ellery Sedgwick, or a discussion with old friends like Messrs. P. E. More and F. J.

[12] "Books," May 23, 1926.

[13] October 20, 1925.

[14] "New Letters to a Lady," "Books," January 3, 1926.

[15] December 26, 1925.

Mather, or new friends like Mr. Van Wyck Brooks and Mr. Maxwell Perkins.

Viewed in the lump, all this social activity might give the impression of a much more leisurely pace in living than that of the first year. But the impression would be misleading. Sherman was, if possible, even more harried by his task than before. His speed at his articles did not improve. Occasionally he finished one in a single day's writing, but that was very seldom. The following excerpts from letters to John tell the story quite plainly:

"I keep saying, 'Well, next week I'll take a breath and look around.' But next week, I postpone it till the week after."[16]

"Up till 4:30 this A. M. and awake till 5:30 finishing my Montaigne which had to go in this P. M., then at it again at 8. Feeling rather thick-headed now."[17]

"I've not had a half-hour off yet to think of Christmas till to-night."[18]

"Would like to take a walk. But I haven't had time yet this fall."[19]

"Just finished this week's writing (Saturday night); it's 11:45 and rather done in—though spiritually still in the ring."[20]

"I've been having the dickens of a week with old Abe Lincoln. The trouble was, perhaps, that I read till I got boiled brains, and there was no kick left for writing on the article with. . . . Every day now for several days I've sighed out to your mother, just as I was dropping exhausted into bed with not one other little kick left in the engine: 'And I haven't written to my poor little Johnnie!' Just like that!"[21]

A climax seems to be reached in the letter of February 6th:

DEAR SPUGGINS:

Your letter this A. M. rather tickled me—by asking why the old man doesn't write. It was a satisfaction to ascertain that

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[16]December 13, 1925.
[17]December 19, 1925.
[18]December 22, 1925.
[19]January 2, 1926.
[20]January 9, 1926.
[21]January 31, 1926.

his miserable little notes are missed when they don't arrive. The reason they haven't been sent is just that the O. M. has been overworked lately and has been almost "all in." This week happened to be a little heavier than ever; for I took on an article on Jefferson which obliged me promptly to get up the entire early history of the United States—so that I've damn near read myself blind; and then to cap the climax your mother has had —— and —— in for a three days visit; and has just fired the girl. I don't consort with the "company"; but stay downstairs and stoke the furnace when I am not writing. But my head has gotten sort of sodden; and I'm in need of 3 hours off.—However, next week I'm going to seek out a soft subject for which I won't have to read but a vol. or two, and will get a chance to ship oars and float with the current a little while.

But in the next one the promise of an intermission is still deferred, announcing an even greater pressure of jobs "which ought to abate a little by and by and leave room for some 'grace notes.'"[22]

And so it goes on: "I've read about thirty-five volumes of verse in the last ten days . . . And now up to the neck in the House Memoirs."[23]

"I don't seem to get round to read much of anything outside the material I go through for an article."[24]

"The 'social life,' so called, knocked me out of my margins last week-end and I missed a letter or two."[25]

"I've got to get back to the letters of dear old Vicky. . . . With 1400 pages and a 'Letter' this is going to be a terrible week!"[26]

The same note is heard in a letter to his mother, written at the turn of the year.

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[22]February 9, 1926.
[23]February 21, 1926.
[24]March 6, 1926.
[25]March 21, 1926.
[26]March 31, 1926.

(*To Mrs. Ada P. Sherman*)

52 Jane Street, New York City,
Jan. 4, 1926.

DEAR MOTHER:

That was a fine letter of yours—full of all kinds of interest. And what a fine letter-writer you have always been. You make me envious of your art. I'm always thinking that sometime I will write a decent letter myself. But while I'm doing my article, the pile of letters from all sorts of people, business, and notes to the Editor, mounts up; and by the time I have dispatched a dozen little notes the well has ceased to flow.—We are feeling cheerful this P. M. because our Johnny who wrote sadly last time about a rather grievous impacted wisdom tooth which threatened a painful jaw operation now writes to say that perhaps it won't have to be operated after all, and now he doesn't have any acute pain except what is caused by the need of a new suit of clothes, etc. And he is going soon to be allowed to get up and have his dinners in the dining room. So we are feeling as cheerful as the dickens and taking a new start in the year.—You all must be having great thoughts and disturbances within on account of Jimmy's departure for school. I don't know just when he is to go. But I hope it is going to be a good thing for him and Kitty. O, please tell Kitty that I'm a hound not to have acknowledged her beautiful maple sugar. Tell her I made the postman wait while I opened the box and gave him a piece, boasting of Vermont. Tell yourself also that the socks are lovely, and our legs are beautifully provided for. And I might have written about this before.—And that we had Ellen Glasgow to dinner with us Saturday night—with the Van Dorens and a young man from Doubleday, Page & Co. And that Ellen is a fine old sport of 52, with red silk stockings and an ear trumpet, and wit like firecrackers. And that dinners nearly kill me—and I've got to go to three or four this week—two at Mrs. Whitelaw Reid's—one of them editorial staff of *Tribune*. And I haven't any swell clothes!—to wear at that formal affair in the Madison Ave. palace—my dinner clothes being composed of (1) vest made 20 years ago in Wmstown, (1) coat bought ready made 10 years ago in New York, (1) "pants" bought

three years ago in Urbana.—Woes of the "fast" life. However, authors are supposed to be a needy and threadbare class, and to have minds above their trousers. Don't you think "Books" is improving its clothes lately? We do.

It's raining here to-day. For which we are thankful in the present low state of the coal.

Much love to you all.
Affectionately,
STUART.

On April 18th, Sherman wrote to Villard that never till this year had he had "a really heartfilling sense of life as one damned thing after another," and in thanking Mr. McNitt for a review in his magazine he said, "There was one point you made which caused me to shout to my spouse that I was recognized and understood at last. 'He works like a horse.' You probably phrased it more elegantly but that was the tenor of it."[27]

But the most significant remark that escaped him in this connection was in response to the promptings and urgings from Mr. Sedgwick, who had been pursuing him ruthlessly all the year for some sequel to the Cornelia papers.

(*To Ellery Sedgwick*)

52 Jane Street,
New York City.
April 25, 1926.

DEAR SEDGWICK:

That was an entrancing note in which you bracketed asking for my novel (God bless us) with asking for the chief blessing of this "mortal vale." To aggravate the pull of it, my own Blessing this day called my attention to the huge prize you are offering to a successful endeavor in your line. I had five minutes off this evening in which I played with the idea like Beelzebub playing with the idea of resuming his robe and his heavenly lyre. But this Juggernaut to which I am attached consumes me

[27]May 30, 1926.

flesh, bones, and fingernails at present. I expect a shorter vacation this summer, and we're going to Colorado to be with the boy, and I'm to lecture there to pay the expense of the expedition—and it looks again like a desire gone glimmering for another year. Quite aside from my suspicion that you wouldn't care for *Cornelia's Husband* if I got the thing out as I see it.

Are you tired of reading this now? If not read on, and hear what I have already told you, that ultimately I'm still hoping to live through this business that I am in, and retire to a life of perfectly free writing activity. If the thing comes to pass, then I think *Cornelia's Husband* will be written, and sundry other things. Perhaps I had better join the Hall-Nordhoff colony where the margins on the book of life are wider.

I am glad you wrote. You sort of cheer my inner spirit—not that it is drooping. On the contrary, I am getting more interested daily in this "sorry scheme of things." Hoping you are the same,

Sincerely yours,
STUART SHERMAN.

The fact that he was already looking upon his journalistic criticism as a business to be lived through is in itself of some interest. It is hard to say just how seriously he was playing with the idea, but a few weeks later in a talk with Mr. McNitt he was listening attentively to a plan which would enable him to renounce newspaper work and devote himself more fully to creative writing. Mr. McNitt's idea was to set up a press and make use of Sherman as a literary adviser. "He asked me," says Mr. McNitt, "whether I proposed setting up the press in the city or in the country, and when I told him that I had in mind an establishment in the country, he said: 'That would be fine. When everyone else seems to be trying to make the country pay tribute to the city, it would be very much worth while for someone to try to carry some of the beauty of life into the country.' Then he asked me: 'Would there be an extra house conveniently at hand in this place in the country where I could come and spend part of the time?' I told him that there would indeed be such a house available where he could come and do as he pleased, giving as much time as he might like to writing of

his own. The prospect seemed to please him very much, and he said gleefully that he thought he could write some excellent publicity matter for books; that he thought it would be rather jolly to show what he could do in helping to sell the books."[28]

It should be added, however, that to the day of his death Sherman betrayed hardly any other sign of loss of interest in his job. One cannot be sure that it is to be regarded as evidence of weariness in his calling when he writes to Mr. Perkins, in reference to his recent article on Colonel House, that he is acquiring the callousness of a publisher, or of a fish-dealer in regard to last week's fish: "In the 'roar' of weekly production E. H. H. is already become ancient history. Isn't that progress? At present, I am recovering from the Mark Sullivan Fever, as my article on his joyous work goes to press to-day."[29] This was probably a display of the newspaper man's pose which he used to flaunt with humorous relish before his friends. When some of the reviews of *Critical Woodcuts* called attention to the journalistic quality of his new essays, he took great pleasure in showing them to Mr. Julian Mason who had been insisting that the front page of "Books" was not sufficiently journalistic. Of course, the proprietors of the *Herald Tribune* had no desire to convert Sherman into a journalist. Their purpose in bringing him to their newspaper was to give it "literary" distinction. Judging from a conversation with Mr. Geoffrey Parsons, his progress in the direction of journalism was not a cause of congratulation. In the editorial room one day Mr. Parsons told him he was getting "too modern" and, mentioning the essay on Montaigne as his idea of "a fine piece," asked him whether it would have been any different if it had been written in Urbana. Sherman replied that the sentence structure was different, whereupon Mr. Parsons laughed and said: "You were pretty damn good then."

The executive duties of his office were a little heavier than usual for Sherman in the spring of 1926 owing to the troubled health of the associate editor; but it is evident from the following letter that he bore them with a good spirit.

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[28]Letter from Mr. V. V. McNitt to Jacob Zeitlin, January 17, 1928.

[29]March 22, 1926.

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

52 Jane Street,
New York City.
April 20, 1926.

IRITA: As you are a scholar perhaps you can tell me whether there is such a word as Agna. At any rate, Agna Dei, we regret the—(we must not regret your absence; we hope it will be *long*) —but we regret the *lack of your presence**—with one auspicious and one drooping eye. Not that all doesn't go with utmost smoothness with you in Yaddo. Owing, as Julian has already pointed out, to your perfect organization, all goes without a hitch. Did yesterday (Monday). In fact I think you got out one of your best papers yesterday; and I don't see how you did. —The office was serene, except that your friend, Miss Carlisle, came in and wanted me to help her $100 reward into all the newspapers in Montreal; and I had to throw her out again. Her contempt for my inefficiency was sovereign. Julian asked after you solicitously. Your friend G. P. I didn't get to see. I asked Ogden to review a book. He *seemed* pleased, but he is always pleasant. Garreta stayed through with Pat, but they or G. sent me home at about nine o'clock to read some of my negro prize stories.—Speaking of office news, I got a leading editorial in the Chicago *Chronicle* (Jewish) on my *un*-Nordic breadth.

This noon I had lunch at the Chatham with "Molly" Colum and Perkins. I suggested to M. C. that in her forthcoming review she refer to me as a "gross bulk of Babbittry with the little finger nails of the angel Gabriel." She made a note of it. She was very pleasant. She thinks American family life is too domestic. Pointing to a table of a dozen American women aldermen lunching near us she said "that could not happen in the British Isles." But all her sins I forgave her to-day, for she asked Perkins if he had ever met you, and called you, she weighs her speech carefully, the most perfectly charming person she has ever met. So you see the woman has judgment. But, for that matter, it was only I—not you—that doubted it. Of course this is only one more instance of the truth which I have often acknowledged: that whenever I have differed with you in any respect I have always been wrong. My own con-

tribution to the conversation at this point was to remark that you perpetually astonish me by the swiftness of your intuitions which, I added, were "always right." All in all, it was a very pleasant party.

My original thought was to wait till I received the promised letter and to take my note from that. But my impulse to-night was to write at once and I shall never be an executive till I learn to act promptly on impulse. Yesterday I made a few respectful and tentative suggestions to Belle about sending out some books. But I hesitated so, showed such an uncertain and groping mind—that [s]he delivered at once a well-composed paragraph of satire on the essentials of the "executive mind." Hence the allusion.

But I should not *mention* any details of the office. I brought them in only for their humorous color, please believe. And because they are the only colors on my palette.

I hope you are finding the æsthetic atmosphere of Yaddo salutary, the conversation good, and the rest better. I hope your throat is beginning to feel like that of the skylark. I hope that you are letting the world slide. I trust that you are not giving us a thought beyond an occasional reflection that we are devotedly

Yours
STUART.

*Just as we do sunlight, spring, and all the good gifts of God, which in His providence he occasionally withholds for our better appreciation thereafter.

The cultivation of the intimacy with John continued steadily throughout the year by letters in which there is affection, paternal pride in John's qualities, encouragement, and, occasionally, remonstrance; for the ordeal of confinement sometimes drove the patient to disregard salutary caution.

(*To John*)

52 Jane Street, New York City,
October 10, 1925.

DEAR SPUGGINS:

Well, on second thought I decided to send you the *Letters to a Lady*, without waiting to see whether you were curious about

them. If not, you can lend them to someone else. It was considerable consolation to me to read, in one of Lloyd Osbourne's introductions to the 32 vol. R. L. Stevenson which I am reviewing for next time, that he kept saying, till *Treasure Island* was written—he kept saying to R. L. S., "Why don't you write something interesting?"

While turning over in my mind recollections of the effect R. L. S. has had on three generations, I came across a memory of you at the age of probably about 8. You were upstairs dressing for breakfast. You had a sort of bright bewildered look. You said: "I have had the most wonderful dream." "What was it?" I asked. And you: "I dreamed that I met Robert Louis Stevenson under a waterfall, and he told me about the parts of dreamland that I had not seen." I think later in the morning you told me you hadn't really dreamed it, but had read it somewhere; but I couldn't find any source but the dream. Do you recall it? Rosie [Miss Rosenbaum] called me up this A. M. and asked whether to send *Black Laughter* to me or "direct to *John*," so that you see you are known and remembered at the office.

Stevenson, by the way,—I've been through a lot of his literary criticism, his papers on the technique of letters and his ethical essays—Stevenson was a very expert craftsman, and also a very fine, gay, sound-spirited man, with an independent, strongly individual bent. You ought to read some of this side of his work. I think you are acquainted hitherto almost exclusively with the stories and romances. The morality (I use the word in the broad sense of the *view of life* and personal conduct) would, I believe, affect you now as favorably as the stories did when you were younger. The *Letters*, too, are very gay and bracing reading; I've read them over and over. I'm going to have another crack at his adverse critics—malicious, idle, ignorant dogs.

To-day, all in a burst, as I was studying my next article, there came upon me the general flavor and form of a novel,—perhaps to be called *Cornelia's Husband*, which is an account of the way Cornelia looked to Oliver while he was living away from her in Paris.

Your Mother has at last got those pajamas into the mail—to-day—beautiful blue butterfly things.

Your Mother has a "cultured" colored lady from Harlem working here P. M.'s, and preparing the evening meal, so that we no longer frequent the stately landlord Marchese's 75c *table d'hôte*, alas. My only consolation for the loss of this Italian color, spaghetti, and radishes is that the maid's name is Suleme! Isn't that a perfect stunner? I think so.

Affectionately,
FATHER.

The *Letters to a Lady* produced a more favorable impression than had been expected.

"I was flattered almost to extinction," wrote the proud author, "by the mere idea of your reading the *Letters:* and when you went on to say that you rather liked them, and that they weren't harf—why, I was quite prostrated with emotion. But I tell you straight, son, I never had a letter about any book or article of mine, from anybody, that *pleased* me so much as this from you.—It has long been the top of my ambition to write something that you wouldn't consider a mere bore. However, I suspect you of spoofin' the old 'un this time."[30]

Sherman was so set up that he promised to bring John into the letters, but his satisfaction on this score was destined to be short-lived, as subsequent letters will show.

(*To John*)

October 28, 1925.

DEAR SPUGGINS:

By the time this reaches you, it will be almost your eighteenth birthday. Yesterday your mother and I went up to 42nd Street, and selected as our birthday remembrance a piece of wearing apparel, suitable to the season, which we hope you will think is rather "sporting." It is a "windbreak," if, as Don Marquis would say, you know what I mean—one of those leather or chamois jackets, which fit up rather snug around wrist and neck. Your mother has been looking also for some right sort of gloves, etc., but her eye has not lighted on just the right thing yet.—When you get into this and get the radio installed, we

[30]October 20, 1925.

hope like time you will feel that we are really "in" on the celebration.

Yesterday I had Sherwood Anderson to lunch at the Century Club. A. had been up till 3 the night before at a party with his publisher, Horace Liveright, and the same is a rather gay person at a party, and S. A. was still feeling a bit shaky. But under my sober ministrations he righted and we had a couple of agreeable hours of conference. He tells me that his wife *hopes* he is the sort of person that I painted him. He is doing a new book on the relation of people to houses—what houses do to people and what people do to houses. Sometimes, he says, a room is made sour by the appearance in it of a person. He thinks Dreiser has kept himself "sweet." He is avoiding —— as not a safe person to meet. He has bought a 35-acre farm in Virginia, price $1400, and is expecting to live there rustically with his wife and the black servant who has become attached to them in New Orleans where they are living now.—I showed him the exhibition of painting by Carlton Chapman in the Century Gallery. He thinks Chapman is some relative of his; but he is hazy about all his relatives! . . . He is an agreeable fellow, with all sorts of interesting instincts, but he declares himself that he has never been able to *reason* about things and probably never will be.

I've just received Miss Ostenso's *Wild Geese*, $13,500 prize novel. Quite a powerful story of Icelandic farming community in Minnesota. I of course was constantly reminded of the Stones and Axes—often by contrast. Scands. all.

(*To The Same*)

Nov. 5, 1925.

Dear *Johnnie:*

(I don't know just why that word came to-night instead of Spuggins. Perhaps it was because I've just dug out of one of the green boxes a photo, in which you and I are both sitting in one chair looking at a picture book. In those days I often called you "Pete." When I first came back from Arizona and went to the Academy some of the fellows used to call me "Arizona Pete"; and very likely your young nickname originated there.)

I'm up to the ears this week trying to get ready for my Detroit–Buffalo trip; and your mother has been doing the letter writing. I've got four speeches to deliver within the next ten days, and at least two of them still to write, besides my regular work. On that, however, I am 24 hours ahead.

We were tremendously pleased by the letter in which you said you were "feeling fine." Nothing could be finer, here. We also were glad you liked the leather jacket. When I was a youth, leather always had a fascination for me. I tried to make it out of gophers' hides. I used to stand for hours, it seems, staring at the Spanish leather saddles in the Los Angeles shops. Riv Nimock and I always bought the expensive *porpoise hide* shoestrings for our shoes. They cost 10c. At least Riv always had porpoise hide; and I used to envy him. Riv had more spending money than I did.* And so when I saw these leather jackets in a window, I ran straight home to your mother and told her we'd just got to get one for Johnnie. It was the "fulfillment" of a wish (*Wunsch*) of my childhood.

*His father was a carpenter and therefore well-to-do.

In the next week there are several cheering letters from John which cause Sherman's mind to dart pleasurably into the future:

"Your letter this A. M. with report on the examination, and the cheering conclusion that you are 'on the right track.' Let's continue there! Six months is quite a while from one point of view; from another point of view not so long. We will have some good out of it yet, old Boy, and we'll have some good times, too. See if we don't. In fact, maybe we are having some of them now. I don't know whether you feel it at all that way. But I was thinking just then of the way we are getting acquainted by mail, and somehow managing to feel pretty close together even with quite a number of physical miles between.—I'm just back at midnight from make-up, which is changed now to Monday. And the first thought that comes up into my head when I enter the house is, 'Now I'll go down to the study and have a little talk with John, and that will be the best part of the day.' And here I am talking away to you just about as freely as if you were, say, at the end of a telephone on 19th street."[31]

[31]November 23, 1925.

Comments on books and writers of all kinds naturally occur with great frequency:

"I didn't know you had been reading Johnson; nor had I hoped that you would succumb to the charms of the Old Bear for some years yet. Still I knew it would come. He can't really be resisted once you know him."[32]

"I think [Montaigne] pretty nearly the most interesting and delightful person who ever expressed himself in words. Extraordinary all around human being. Wonderfully live mind. Great Candor, tang, openness of mind and heart. Extraordinary range of curiosity and experience. . . . He is as rich as Boswell's Johnson."[33]

"I think at the present stage of your æsthetic development [*The Mauve Decade*] will be as valuable to you as a semester at Harvard—perhaps a good deal more so. It strikes me that it is full of suggestions about (1) how to write and (2)—much more important—about how to *see*, and (3) about how to make other people *feel* what you feel when you see things. The last is a trick in great part of the suggestive *image* which plunges into the deeps of the conscious like a thrilling blade."[34]

"After what you say about *Richard Kane* I'm afraid I was not sufficiently appreciative. Evidently you found the work more 'sympathetic' than I thought you would. In that Edman is nearer your point of view than I feared. Your literary comments and observations are always instructive to my years."[35]

There is an interesting allusion to the wrath of Urbana at the "Interview with a Newcomer in New York," in the November *Scribner's*. "Your mother," he reports, "suffers a good deal; I, not much."[36]

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[32]November 14 (?) 1925.

[33]December 16, 1925.

[34]April 15, 1926.

[35]May 6, 1926.

[36]December 30, 1925. To Professor Pattee, who had told him of the feeling roused by the essay among his former colleagues, Sherman wrote: "I am sorry no one there found time to *read* that offending article, which so far as the 'U. of I.' was concerned was good 'publicity' and almost, if not quite, wholly complimentary. As I remember, the 'U. of I.' was put on a plane with the best universities anywhere in the country. . . . If anyone asks you what I meant by the piece, please say that I intended it to be understood as 'a sigh of relief heaved up out of the heart of the profession.' That will be understood at least by the 'stalwart few.'"

On one occasion at least it was John who was wrathful, and the event brought out whatever meekness there was in Sherman's nature:

"I feel better acquainted with you since you let yourself out in your latest long letter. Give us some more as Pamela says (see Richardson) 'of your sweet injunctions.' But write comfortable words next time, Brother, for I'm still a little raw from the onslaught, and I want to hear the genial and reassuring Spuggins again."[37]

And then the sore subject of the *Letters to a Lady* intrudes itself again, John's "critical attack" this time placing his father on the strict defensive. It was the first, and perhaps the only time that he was goaded into serious apology.

(*To John*)

March 14, 1926.

Dear Spug:

Your critical attack on me and my works cheered me up wonderfully. In the first place, I was pleased that you liked Lawrence's reviewer—Kath. Porter. She did the piece, a rather notable one, on Cath. the Great some weeks ago. Secondly, I was pleased that you were satisfied with the House—a slightly ticklish job, as the *Trib.* was publishing the memoirs in serial form. But, thirdly, I was particularly pleased with your smashing blow at Paul, Car. and Jim. That was exhilarating. The story doesn't amount to anything at present. The emotions are not of any amorous interest, nor are they intended to be this year; therefore they aren't properly to be compared with the Arlen stuff, etc. I regard the letters as a machine or vehicle for discussing books, plays, pictures. You will see there is some typical stuff in each of mine. And second, for discussing psychology of mood, feminine unrest with reference to *career*, etc. That is the special topic. I regard it merely as a "feature," and I run it only because the management desired it and have only recently expressed wish for continuance. I'm tickled, however, by your onslaught.

[37]February 17, 1926.

(*To The Same*)

March 26, 1926.

DEAR SPUGGINS:

Your last letter gingered me up again—it was so uplifted, so incisive, so critical, and so pleasant. I said to the General Auditor: "That boy has a mind, you know." She hated to admit it—orally. She would. But internally she was pleased to have me make the point. She would be. I could see that she was. For, as you are aware, she is transparent as window glass. You can see the heart beating through. . . .

In your uncompromising hostility to Paul and Caroline—in expressing, you inadvertently slipped in some appreciation, which I snatched at. Incidentally, it was in my original plot of the affair to have Paul end up a rather enthusiastic New Yorker, just as Benedick (in *Much Ado*), after railing at married men, ends up a much married one—so that the joke is on himself.

In conducting his retreat, however, the wounded author does not refrain from discharging a few Parthian arrows. "Oh, yes," he casually interpolates into a letter, "Perkins told me that they had sold 2700 copies of *Letters to a Lady in the Country*, and that they had just printed a new edition. What about it from that point of view? I realize that doesn't alter its literary value."[38] And his final shot is:

"My *Letters to a Lady in the Country* is thought not so damnable as you usually pronounce it."[39]

In order to be with John for part of the summer Sherman accepted an invitation to teach at Colorado College in the summer session. It was through no hankering for a return to the academic life. Curiously enough, the universities continued to court him in spite of the rebuff he had administered in the notorious *Scribner's* essay. Texas offered him a chair, Harvard asked him to teach in the summer, Brown and Dartmouth offered him honorary degrees. By these tokens of appreciation he was sensibly touched, and he was sincerely regretful that his

[38]March 30, 1926.

[39]May 30, 1926.

engagements prevented him from accepting the honor extended to him by Dartmouth. He seemed to think it necessary to avail himself of the invitation from Colorado College to earn the expenses of his trip West.

The story of the six weeks in Colorado Springs between June 20th and July 31st is told with ample fullness in letters to his mother, to Mrs. Van Doren, and to Miss Busey. The repetition of his homesickness for New York, his boredom with teaching in spite of the enthusiasm of his students, his pleasure in the society of John and of some of the interesting people he met (an old acquaintance of Harvard days, Dr. Ryder, is the only one among them whose name is not mentioned in these letters), the social life of the place, his address to the Colorado Springs Rotarians, and his meeting on that occasion with the man who claimed to have sat for the portrait of Elmer Gantry, his expeditions into the country roundabout, and the articles he worked on—all these phases of his life are reported in the suffusion of his moods and sentiments. To Mrs. Van Doren, on the day after his arrival at Colorado Springs, he sent an account of the trip and of getting settled.

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

1613 Wood Ave., Colorado Springs, Col.,
June 21, 1926.

DEAR EDITOR: 2 P. M. Mountain Time. Monday. I figure that you have just been leaning over the forms with your rose colored gown, thrusting out arms, holding down cuts fearlessly under Jimmie's hammer, and that you have now gone up stairs, and are dictating to Belle, in the interval before the arrival of proofs. The vision is not highly imaginative. It ought therefore to be accurate.

We reached here Sunday 7 A. M. and are now settled in the house of the Dean of Men (who is in Rochester). John is here with us. Also an Indian-Ethiop called Gabriella or, for short, Gabe. We have a lot of grass and trees and song birds and mountains. Yesterday we had calls from the Dean of Women and the President and his wife. To-day I've been acquainting

myself with the place where I'm to open shop to-morrow at 10 and 11. They have used the most tragically repellent of Zadig's cuts a good deal for advertising here—displaying it even on the summer session schedule—so I am hoping for small classes.—But the whole academic business makes me quite ill. To forget it this A. M. I wrote a note on "Fan" [?].

When we weren't unpacking yesterday, we spent most of the time at Cragmor. John and his roommate Bascom Kennedy were both very agreeable and said amusing things. Both of them drive rather good cars; for Ken. owns one, and a "chaser" downtown whose wife-chauffeur has left him has lent John his car for the summer.—But in spite of all this gaiety—including Arabella and the four kittens whom the boys kept under the bed—my spirits have not yet quite risen to the occasion.

Often on the way out, I thought of your invincible gayety against heavy odds all this spring and that is almost more marvellous than your performance of all the duties of your office even when under ether. You are very wonderful. You have had to be! But from now on you must try to be a little less wonderful, a little more moderate in the permissions which you exact from heaven.

I am disgusted to find that, just as last year, I feel no special sympathy for those of you who are still in New York—busy about getting out another number of "Books." It's myself that is all wrapped up in self-compassion because I am not there. But as I don't at all approve of saying these things, I had better cut this short. I shall send a card or other greeting presently to the "Books" office. And if I can catch a little of the marvelous meadowlark music that wakes one here early in the chill mornings out of a perfect stillness, I will send some of that, too.

S.

Perkins sent quite a bunch of English reviews of *Critical Woodcuts*—all friendly enough—only one or two who thought I had much corrupted the language.

On the same day he wrote to Miss Busey:

"Not having an article in view for Saturday leaves a vast, strange void. I trust hard labor has not yet become so habitual

with you that you suffer without it. Strive rather to fill your mind with large, luminous designs and resolutions."

A week later the *ménage* is described in a letter to his mother.

(*To Mrs. Ada P. Sherman*)

1613 Wood Avenue, Colorado Springs.

DEAR MOTHER:

This is our second Sunday in Col. Springs. I have been lecturing for a week. We have a faculty man's house on a pleasant street about eight blocks from the college. It is cool downstairs all the time, and cool upstairs at night. There is a good lawn and garden which needs to be irrigated daily, for the water disappears in this soil as in sand. The Col. Springs people have much developed their flower gardens since we were here seventeen years ago. John has a sleeping porch, and spends most of his time in bed reading and talking to the family. He has intellectually developed much from his sanatorium experience. He is one of the best conversers I have ever known, and I think he has a pretty fine disposition—reasonable, philosophical, facing his facts, yet never grumbling, groaning or complaining. All the reports say that he is slowly improving, but he faces probably a couple of more years of this close relationship to his bed, though they may set him to taking a little daily exercise in a few months.

We have a colored girl who does the meals, and leaves the family (in its leisure) free to converse with John, who seems to wish to talk enough in the next six weeks to make up for the past year in which he hasn't seen us.

Is Kath. with you this summer? I had hoped to get to see you before we came West, but there was no interval between writing my last article for to-day's *Tribune*, and beginning my lectures in the summer session last Tuesday. Your last letter spoke of some trouble (with your feet) which I hope has improved. I hope you are finding some joy in the Dorset hills and skies which must be very fine this month. If a tree were not in front of my window I could see Pike's Peak from where I am writing. It still is streaked near the top with snow. It regularly rains for half an hour here in the afternoon, but in the

morning we enjoy the celebrated "turquoise sky" of this latitude and altitude.

Love to you all.
Affectionately,
STUART.

The next letter to Mrs. Van Doren records a recovery of spirits, tells of his trouble over Swinburne, and encloses a "foolish" clipping from the Sunday (June 27th) *Gazette and Telegraph* of Colorado Springs on the "inspiring" and "thrilling" lectures of Dr. Stuart P. Sherman, unfolding to his spellbound classes "the deepest thoughts of the world's greatest poets and the world's greatest dramatists," with more to the same effect, calculated to amuse a sophisticated New Yorker.

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

1613 Wood Ave., Col. Springs.
June 30, 1926.

MEDUSA: Write me a line! Or when I return to New York, I shall beat you—if I ever return, which is doubtful, if evidence continues accumulating that my absence is such a blessed relief —though I don't see why it should be, thinking of my presence as remarkably inexacting. Two weeks elapse to-day, since we left, and not a word! Yesterday John's copy of "Books" came—the first copy, of which I had seen only "The Pageant." As I expected, it begins to improve—the thrice-damned "Letters" being now no more. Girls in my class also brought up Mary Colum's article in the *Sat. Review*. What a tenacious malicious cat Mary is! I told her for God's sake not to make Don Marquis the leading feature of *Crit. Woodcuts*, as I included it very reluctantly—to please Perkins, etc. That, as I remember, is the *only* article she mentions. The first half of the review is repetition of the misstatements she made about the other book.—Henry must have engaged her with the idea she would kill the book as she did *Points of View*. Fortunately she was so slow that everyone was out of town before she came out.

Are you in Cornwall by now? Have the rough edges of your

throat worn smooth? Have you put on five pounds, like a properly recuperative "little whale"? Have you with that incomparable organizing faculty and that foresight which puts to blush the ordinary prevision of providence—so instructed the office that your heart and mind are free to respond to the boon influences of the hills (and the pond)? Are you beginning to regain that look of the wild rose which you brought back from week ends in the fall of 1924?—Here is a nice little row of questions to which I know not the answer. The only point of which I am sure is that *you are not wasting any of your vacation* in writing letters to the person who undoubtedly would more fully appreciate one than anyone else of your acquaintance.

The first note that I sent you from Col. Springs had a rather dolorous sound, I fear. For a few days we were rather depressed. The whole town, if one takes it in, is a sort of beautiful hospital —flower-gardened and mountain-walled. Practically every house, they say, contains an exile. Then John wasn't as much recovered as we had hoped. He still spends most of the day in bed. But he is such an old brick—such a good philosopher—so uncomplaining, so coolly realistic, so gay, and such a good various flexible talker that he has quite restored my spirits, and I should be ashamed to show less morale than he does. We are all greatly enjoying ourselves with talk and reading. The house is comfortable and we have a good maid. I give two lectures at the college in the A. M.; and then repeat one of them after lunch to John.

I've spent quite a bit of leisure with Swinburne, in the works, and in four or five books on him. I'm waiting for the recent Macmillan book for which I sent to the company before doing an article. 60% of Swinburne is an awful bore. The rest has certain interests.

The Harcourts have sent here *to the right address* Nock's book on Jefferson. I don't know whether any significance attaches to it. It seems a good book with a lot of detail that doesn't appear in the ordinary life. I imagine you have already sent it to some reviewer.

We noted in Sunday's *Times* the announcement of *The Ninth Wave*. Ruth thinks it should be the seventh wave. I am very keen to see the book.

You can see very well, if you use your wits, that I am making

an effort to extract a letter from you. I know too well how ill you think of my own efforts at letter writing. You have left me in no doubt of that. But be a good girl and write at least once, as you promised. If it is any inducement, I will even promise *not* to write a reply.—It occurs to me of a sudden, with a horrid pang, that you are leaving the office for a month, and that last year I got no reply to my letters till you had returned to the office and could dispatch it in the office routine. However, as I have told you so many times before, my devotion to you has no reference whatever to any expectation of return. I write only as I salute the lord sun, or the snow-capped peak to the westward —as splendid and magnificent phenomena of nature which exact mortal tribute as their due, and give or withhold as they please. But you had better send a line just the same. It would be a nice thing to do. Love to you all.

STUART.

A week later he alludes to his finished article on Swinburne: "I am not stuck on the review! But after diligent efforts, I could find no emotion but hideous boredom with reference to A. C. S., and the longer I worked, the more I was bored—i.e., reacting in behalf of 'the people.' He interests me technically, and I could write a paper on his styles, but not in 'Books.' "[40]

(*To Irita Van Doren*)

July 12, 1926.

You were a dear to send two notes which had nothing to do with the office—and so did not *have* to be written! As age advances I find myself more and more exclusively used as part of the mechanism of society. It is very refreshing to be even for a few moments a totally useless entity—"if you know what I mean." It is very refreshing too to think of you for a few moments as an adjunct to larkspur and wild strawberries (I don't forget the crate) and the little lake.—I grow faint when I try to conceive the prevision which accompanied your departure from the city. If you hadn't the intellectual swiftness of the

[40] July 6, 1926.

eagle and the wisdom—the instantaneous wisdom of the seraphim, you would never have got away. I hope you are letting the children wander carefree as gypsies and letting Carl starve and devoting no more days to canning but most of them to restorative communion with "boon nature." Don't forget that you are the vase which contains all our *esprit*, without which we are but tinkling cymbals.—I liked your paragraph of flowers. Our red and blue and purple mountains here are full of wild ones this year—under daily rains: yuccas, mariposa lilies, pentstemons (with the "ecstatic" blue), tiger lilies, gilias, mertensias, briar roses, primroses, paintbrush, golden rod, asters (already). I enclose a Pike's Peak forget-me-not from the top of the Peak where I went after lectures Friday—making a full day, thinking of you and your intensive cultivation of odd moments, thinking of you too on the mountainside, and wishing you were there to see the dark snow-tarns and the white clouds floating below and the great peaks to the west of the Continental Divide. Very likely that was where the dream started—up there among the purple peaks. At any rate I am happy to have been in one of them, and the going away was an illusion. Good night. . . .

S. S.

In the group of letters to Miss Busey, Sherman again appears as the guiding friend, ever ready with sympathy, encouragement, and stimulation.

(*To Garreta Busey*)

1613 Wood Ave., Colorado Springs, Col.,
July 9, 1926.

DEAR GARRETA:

Your two letters have much helped to keep the stream of what we call intellectual life flowing. I am a little amused by the evidence I detect in your letters that Urbana invades you and takes possession of the faculties of your soul and removes from you more or less the capacity to control the stream of your creative thought. I don't understand wholly the psychology of this, but I have fully *experienced* it. Some kind of "complex" or other gets in its deadly work so efficiently under certain circum-

stances that I can't write a sentence. I'm like "Poor Susan" in Wordsworth's poem, "the stream will not flow and the hill will not rise." There are only a few bits of colored glass which most of us can shake into patterns to please us. For such of us the secret of success in life is just to keep these bits of glass constantly in hand. The larger success, of course, would be to find some way of taking other scraps of the earth—pebbles, minerals, bits of wood—and so treating them that they too would color up, shimmer, and hop into place in the pattern.—I suppose that is what you were at this spring when you said you were making over your images, metaphors, vocabulary, etc. It seems to me that you have a pretty broad, continuous general stream of feeling in which you are going to be able to float almost any kind of craft—after some experiments with navigation.

Here we don't try to do a vast deal besides minister to our hundred summer students—about ½ are students and I should say nearly ½ married women—teachers and idle women about town and a lot of invalid visitors, etc. I give two lectures a day at the college, and then repeat one for John—I've done one article for "Books" on Swinburne, which is pretty poor. The compliment from your Western friend makes me much ashamed. I do like to make a subject come to life at some point, and I'm afraid this comes to life at none.—But I arrived here spiritually very low—and am only just beginning to pull up to the surface again.—There is nothing that has stimulated me much here, except the flowers domestic and wild. To-day Ruth and I went up Pike's Peak, after class, and got quite elated by mountain flowers and mountain mist and wild speed.—Ruth is delighted to hear of the irises. You can put them in anywhere that you see a place. I went up in the Mts. last week with a real character—a teacher and naturalist—about 50—who is also a poet—and has written some interesting things for the *Mesa*—Milton Rose. It seems to me that Pat once mentioned him in the "Worm."

Let us meditate next fall on what the "organic filaments" of the *new* literary movement are. Did you see the anonymous long article in the *New Republic* in which all the literary performance of the last decade is disdainfully swept into the dust bin? That leaves a fine opening for you!—and your young generation. It is a fine thing to be 33 yrs. old. At this juncture

in American literary history there is an awful lot for *you* people to do—to fill the vast vacuum. Be of good cheer and of high and difficult enterprise. I envy your getting to work again!

S. S.

(*To The Same*)

1613 Wood Ave., Colorado Springs, Col.
July 17, 1926.

DEAR GARRETA:

Don't allow yourself to sink into that midsummer discouragement. Say to yourself that the mood is transitory. Remember that the sun goes shining all the way across our fair land. I speak out of a heart full, for the rays fall here absolutely undiluted by mist and almost undiminished by atmosphere—as through a burning glass. I scorched the palms of my hands—almost—today, turning the brass knob of the door to the Administration Bldg. Also consider that your favorite "dead horses" in 40th St. aren't so much more depressing than dying men. The one person who regularly runs in here evenings invariably has a report on the latest hemorrhages of her friends, and of course all John's acquaintances have temperatures and symptoms as a leading item in the day's news. He has just been calling this evening on a friend who to-morrow is taking her sister home to die—I sketch the setting only to indicate that we have the necessary data for sympathy!—The hollyhocks are splendidly scarlet in the back yard. Red roses climb the porch lattice next door. And by daily watering I keep our grass from tanning seriously.—At Broadmoor this P. M. we peeped thru the fence at a polo game. The physicians—all T. B.'s hereabout—chirp merrily among their patients. Pat writes that you are back in the office and have brought some Urbanites with you and that there are no books now worth reading—and other matters in her most amusing style. The paper is better than ever—as usual. It was Ruth's idea, not mine, to send you hunting up the Beer book. I hope it won't put you out. I know you for a person of philosophic poise, and explained that to Ruth only yesterday as due to your finding the processes and experiences of your own mind much more interesting than what goes on in the silly world outside—for the most part. You had better write some

poems and give an airing to the "buried life"—just to reassure yourself with regard to your resources. The didactic tone of this note is to be explained by four weeks of being a professor—and a certain lack of amusement here except for John's conversation. He is the best philosopher I know—as rationalistic as nails yet with a good heart. How are you getting on with the revision of your vocabulary and metaphors? Completely "made over" yet? Be sure that the revision is better than the original. That will require some care. This letter hasn't much composition, has it?

S. S.

(*To The Same*)

Sat. P. M. following a cloudburst,
1613 Wood Avenue, Colorado Springs, Col.,
July 25, 1926.

DEAR GARRETA:

Your weatherful (thunderous) letter came to-day. It cheered up the entire family by its news, personality, and various humors; and it contains so much for which I am obliged that I'd better say so at once.

I'm sorry to hear that the "Books" copy seemed so dregsy; but then you know it always does seem rather that way on Sunday P. M.—By Thursday it usually improves. I thought the last issue rather remarkably good and readable—the one containing the Powys article. But so was the preceding one. In fact, all the issues since I went away have been specially good.

B. Hecht has not, for me either, any great quantity of *charm*.

I'm a little sorry, in these torrid days, that my sermon led to such a burst of energy. But perhaps you will find that the revisions of the first five chapters of the *Windbreak* will be a great help to going on. Often I find that my interest is very greatly augmented by stopping an article in the middle and going back and revising the first half to as near "concert pitch" as possible before proceeding. It gives a better springboard. The detail is, in my opinion, fine. One can almost always work in the details. And very often the *life* of writing is in this detail which one overlooks or hastens over in the "high seriousness" of blocking out the main design.—Consider the actor, for example,

and the musician as models—suggestive models—for the writer. All the rapture is in the additional meanings and colors which go in after they begin to *feel* the song or the lines to the fingertips or to the extremities of their hair. You excel in detail —your individuality emerges through it. Your planning is sound and good too because you are highly intelligent. But the poetic character of your perceptions and your feeling for life becomes evident to the mere lay reader seeking for a thrill, like myself, when your whole being lights up with the vision of things beyond the noonday lights. Have the courage of your extreme perceptions. Don't be afraid to be unusual.—Isn't that a rare one from such a conventionalist as I am?

You are quite right too about increasing one's collection of colored glass by some intervals of vegetative receptiveness. I've been doing as much as possible of that while lecturing 15 hrs. a week and writing three articles. (I've just sent off one to the *Mentor* on Cellini.) I have a large couple of classes full of curious types of old school teachers, old city dames (some of the grande dame type), with 50% of college age. I've met a real poet of the Thoreau type—a man—Rose—and have been on an interesting walk with him into the mountains. This A. M. I got up at 5:30 and went into the mountains with a student (male) who is an aviator, editor, special policeman, and a marvelous driver of a car up mountain roads full of hair-pin curves around precipices. We got up back of Cheyenne Mt. about 9 and cooked breakfast about 100 yds. from the source of a mountain brook—among blue mountain columbines, tiger lilies, firs, aspens, chipmunks, grouse, peaks, and a view of the mesa, circling for about 300–400 [miles] north and south, clouds in the sky, vast dark shadows floating over the valley, and a great red-spurred mountain wall behind. We fried bacon, eggs, boiled coffee, had tomatoes and radishes for relish, and talked life and letters over a tiny fire till noon.

By contrast, President Mierow asked me Thursday noon to address the local Rotary, which I understand has been instrumental in giving him a new stadium. I met there the minister (——) who has been sitting to Sinclair Lewis as model for S. L.'s next novel showing the Babbittry of the ministry. —— has entertained Lewis for two months in his home in St. Louis, and was quite anxious to have me know him. Also—I spoke a little against Fundamentalism and had a Texas bishop

in my audience. To-morrow we are going to dinner with the leading social light of C. Springs, and the next day with the wife of a prominent Jewish physician who (the wife) is in my classes. Ruth says there were dinner invitations all this A. M. while I was out—or invitations to ride. Of course she had to put these off till I came home; and when I came home of course it was found that I was engaged.

The "new movement's" filaments are of course not to be found in the work of E. E. Cummings. What a place to look! Look rather in the work of G. H. B., author of *The Windbreak.* We have to find them for ourselves. The point is that the stage is clear. Don't you see? I think we are developing a little interest here about the course which "Books" is going to steer.—Everyone is ready for someone to find something new and interesting. Let's all make an effort, and be sure that what we find is interesting whether it is new or not.

Thanks for news about: Irises
Beer, T.
Swinburne and Jefferson
The Mears family
Irita
Sam
Cournos and Lords
Pat's chumminess (I don't believe that stuff about your looks going off)
Dot
The New Novel

Now don't say this letter doesn't answer yours. (Last time I forgot to acknowledge the *Lit. Digest* reprint of Scars. Ruth and I had already seen it; and I became *careless!* But it made its impression.) One of the points about the "new age" is that people in it will try to write as interesting and as "nice" letters as yours to their friends in remote lands among strangers—so that they (the friends) shall not feel that they have been forgotten of God, of man, and of woman. You are really most extraordinarily nice about that, and I should like to give you a fitting reward for it.

S. S.

There is also a letter to Mrs. Paterson.

(*To Isabel M. Paterson*)

1613 Wood Ave., Colorado Springs,
Colorado,
July 25, 1926.

DEAR PAT: You are—never mind about the "good girl"—what is known technically as an "old peach," and your fruity qualities were never so much appreciated as since the six undergraduate pall-bearers, assisted by six pall-bearers averaging 72 years, have undertaken again to make a professor of this amphibious "journalist"—God save Julian Mason's remarks!—I will say, however, that an aviator in my class told me to-day that I had "got those old ladies buffaloed—they don't know whether you are really pious or an atheist—and they are all up in the air about it." . . .

If you want a really meaty book for that Vancouver Island picnic I can recommend Cellini's *Autobiography*. It has freshened me up considerably. Next year I'm going to try to be—even more like Cellini than last year.—How are your German barbarians?—Aren't you converted yet to modern realism? A message from Garreta—or rather a quotation from you transmitted by Garreta indicates rather clearly that you are *not*. But are you really content to go on writing these defense-mechanism novels? Why lay all these things off on the poor Germans? Haven't we got to an end with this "hate" business yet? Let *Gott strafe Deutschland*. Consider at least lending your pen-full of punishment—to the strafing of your native[?] land.

I think of you often—and whenever I do, feel happier, wiser, and better. In spite of yourself, virtue emanates from you.

S. S.

The end of the summer session found Sherman pretty thoroughly fagged. It seemed highly desirable that he should have some rest before returning to New York, and Mrs. Sherman was determined that he should have several weeks for recuperation. Their cottage in Dunewood was occupied but that of Mr. Evarts Greene was available, so they made straight for Michigan, stopping only long enough in Chicago to have a visit with several

friends who happened to be in the city—Homer Woodbridge, Bruce Weirick of the University of Illinois, and L. I. Brevold, who had also been a member of Sherman's department.

For the first ten days in Dunewood the weather was cold and rainy most of the time, and the bathing impossibly icy. The woods were green, however, and the berries good, so that some amusement could be derived from them. But characteristically, Sherman sat down to enjoy his "vacation" by writing an article for his paper on Squire Osbaldistone. And before this was out of the way came an appeal for a literary contribution from John, who had become the editor of a sanatorium magazine, *Ninety-Eight Six*. Sherman at once proceeded to collect his thoughts for a suitable essay and to send along general advice on writing and editing.

(*To John*)

Dunewood, Manistee, Michigan,
August 7, 1926.

DEAR SPUG:

This A. M. came your second letter about "98.6." Fortunately, I had made considerable response to your first hint—in my last letter. Of course I howled with amusement and vengeful joy when you asked me to contribute something—even something like the *accursed Letters to a Lady in the Country*. But I wish you were here to talk it over. The consequence of your demand has been that I have spent the entire evening (and some of the P. M.) making notes of my memories of Colorado Springs—and sundry other measures for educing a theme. Of course I shall make every effort to "come across" with a contribution. *I haven't much material here*, and what is worse, I haven't been in a really first rate writing vein for some time. Haven't had that alacrity of spirits which is conducive to the production of scintillant *trifles*. But I trust something will come. What I have been hammering on is an impressionistic whiff of your city. —I could do that but I'm rather afraid that if I did it, it would contain rather too many *personalities*. Of course 98.6 is a rather *intime* affair, and perhaps it wouldn't be bad taste for me to be rather more chatty than usual.—I've meant, by the way, to talk to you some time about the difference between scientific

and literary writing—apropos of your complaint that you can't bring yourself to add an extra line after you have presented your facts. The point being that fact is just raw gold. The gold beater's art is to hammer it out thin and fine, and to make it take all sorts of shapes.—The way you say it; that invites endless consideration.—*Slow patient oriental* labor. Don't get yourself over-excited about it. A great secret of writing—a secret of success—is to maintain a superiority complex—and you know that comes fairly easy to you.—I mean a kind of cool, aloof, masterful playing with the idea—to see what shapes one can give it. Remember the artist at the Van Briggle works.

Affectionately,
FATHER.

Before there was time for this letter to reach him, John must have grown impatient and fearful of a refusal, drawing on himself a gentle rebuke from his father:

"And you would not have been so tart about 'Dad will probably not write,' if you could have seen me slaving for the last two or three days trying to reduce to prose my impressions of Colorado Springs to serve as a little article for your paper. I finished the piece about supper time to-night, and if all goes well it will be typed to-morrow."[41]

The title Sherman gave to the article was, "The Flavor of Times and Places."[42] Its aim was to catch and interpret the atmosphere of a locality, and there are in it bits of writing as colorful and brilliant as anything that Sherman ever achieved in this kind. It was in this style that he designed composing his unfulfilled book on Dunewood.

At the end of his first week in Michigan Sherman was already chafing to get back to New York, but "hard as I have striven," he complained, "I have not been able to get my *gaoler* to allow me to return to New York before the 24th (day of arrival in New York). I am very sorry, and hope that God will overrule this late arrival to the advantage in some way of His Kingdom. . . . *Please survive till I come.* I wish to see you again. You may be sure that with my beautiful disposition I am not specially

[41]August 10th.

[42]*Ninety-Eight Six*, September 2, 1926. It was reprinted in *McNaught's Monthly*, November, 1926.

enjoying staying on till the 22nd. I am most eagerly looking forward to seeing you again—and hearing of your designs."[43] Failing to obtain his release, he consoled himself by going to work on an article on William Godwin. This occupied his time till Thursday night. After finishing it, he wrote to John:

"My last article, like practically everything I ever wrote in my life, made me sick with fatigue before I finished it last night —that was 'Godwin.' No great affair either. Worked on it only from Sunday to Thursday night with interruptions and cards and other Dunewood affairs buzzing around. But if I don't work on even a little thing to the point of fatigue it is seldom good.—At nine o'clock Adam took me (Ruth, Harold Hillebrand and Harriet) to Manistee by moonlight to mail it, so that it should get there by Saturday in time for next 'Books.'"[44] In this letter, the last he ever wrote, he had to explain to John that the unwillingness of his parents to buy him a car was dictated solely by regard to his health and well-being, and his closing words to his son were:

"At breakfast the main conversation was regarding J. M. S. —concerning whom I meditate day and night."

After the Godwin essay was done, two days remained for complete relaxation. Sherman's spirits were bright as he contemplated the imminence of his departure. To Harold Hillebrand he declared that the last two years of his life had been happier than all the rest put together. He talked eagerly with friends about plans for making his paper even better than it was. He was looking forward to the subjects of his next essays, who were to be Joseph Hergesheimer and Stephen Crane. On the night of Friday, August 20th, there was a card party in his cottage at which he played the host in his most affable and gracious manner. He took pleasure in showing to his guests a series of photographic studies of editorial celebrities—the work of Doris Ulmann, for whom he also had posed in the preceding spring. The next morning he spent partly in idling, partly in rehearsing the music of "In a Persian Garden," which was to be sung that night at a farewell party in the Scott cabin. After lunch there was a prolonged round of quoits lasting till about

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[43]To Irita Van Doren, August 14, 1926.

[44]August 20th.

four o'clock, when the call came for taking to the water. The lake was pleasant to the eye and skin. There was a warm sun and a surf strong enough to invite a healthy play of the muscles. Going down to the beach in their bathing suits, Sherman and Mrs. Sherman pushed off in their canoe, riding easily athwart the waves. Some of the campers remained lolling on the sand to watch them. In a few minutes they saw the canoe capsized and the couple swimming to shore. It was not an occurrence that called for any special notice. Mrs. Sherman was known to be a strong swimmer and Sherman himself easily capable of reaching safety, particularly as the water was shallow for quite a distance from the edge of the beach. Suddenly Mrs. Sherman was heard to shriek, and when those on shore looked up Sherman himself was not to be seen. Dr. Edwin Draper and Mr. Everett Allison, who were nearest to the spot, ran out to where Mrs. Sherman was standing, in scarcely more than four feet of water. They lifted the body from the bottom and drew it up on the beach. There was a second physician in the camp, Dr. George Murray of Columbus, Georgia, and these two, with the aid of several others, worked over the body for more than an hour but never succeeded in eliciting the smallest spark of life. It was clear that the heart had suddenly snapped. Stuart Sherman was dead before he had reached his forty-fifth birthday.

To those who were on the scene the blow came with such stupefying suddenness that they could not get a realizing sense of what had happened. One can discover many premonitions and warnings after the event, but they were not fixed in anybody's mind at the time. Expressions are constantly occurring in the letters of the last year which, in the light of the tragic sequel, convey a sense of foreboding. In saying good-bye to Miss Busey in June, Sherman told her what he expected of her in the next five years as emphatically as if he knew that he should never see her again. A definite suggestion of something seriously wrong occurs in the essay on "The Flavor of Times and Places," where he says: "I fatuously complained that when I lay on my left side I could not sleep for the violent drumming of my heart upon the taut tympana of my ears." It was as natural for him to disregard such a warning as it had always been to disregard his health, and nature took its own revenge upon him.

The body was conveyed to Dorset, the home of his mother, and in the Congregational Church there, in which his grandfather had served as pastor, the funeral service was conducted on Wednesday. The Rev. Dr. L. M. Clarke of Brooklyn officiated at the service, and Homer Woodbridge read passages from Sherman's writings. The pallbearers were Ogden Reid, Geoffrey Parsons, Huntington Gilbert, Carl Van Doren, Frank Scott, and Carl Smith. From the grave on the hillside there is a view of one of the noblest of New England mountains. Sherman would have been satisfied with the thought of this resting place in one of his adored green valleys of Vermont.

The news of Sherman's death reached the public on the same day as that of President Charles W. Eliot and of a popular hero of the films, but it made an impression, nevertheless. The editorial comment throughout the nation emphasized the importance of the loss which literature in America had suffered. There was not merely a recognition of the fact that a great writer and distinguished critic, whom there was no one to replace, had disappeared prematurely from the scene; there was a general conviction, heightening the sense of loss, that Sherman was at the threshold of an unfolding of still greater powers. The extraordinary capacity for growth of which he had given proof in the last years made it seem that he was destined to attain to a profounder synthesis of the critical spirit than anyone had yet reached in America. That he had not been given time to realize this hope affected his widening circle of admirers as a piece of tragic frustration.

For those who came into personal touch with him, Sherman's death created a void which they were scarcely able to describe. It is remarkable how many even of those who knew him but slightly or had not met him at all expressed a feeling of personal bereavement at his passing. Those who knew him best recognized with Carl Van Doren that "somewhere in him was a greatness not to be measured." They mourned the cruel brevity of his career and the vanishing of something that had imparted a glow, an animation, and a charm to their own lives.

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This bibliography aims in the first place to give an exhaustive statement of Stuart Sherman's own writings. A few stray items may have eluded pursuit, but it is believed that nothing of even minor importance has been missed.

In the second place it aims to indicate the current discussion of his articles and books. Here there can be no pretence of exhaustiveness, but the selection of reviews and comments is sufficiently comprehensive to reflect the varieties and shades of opinion in different parts of the country and differing sections of the press.

Finally it gives a list of obituary comments and several lists of books and articles (in addition to the reviews of particular essays and books) in which Sherman and his work come in for general discussion at greater or less length. This section has an even smaller claim to completeness. But limited as the references are in number, they may have some value, particularly the posthumous ones, in showing the impression left by Sherman upon those who are interested in the development of literary forces in America.

Reference to newspapers is made only by date, to other periodicals generally by volume and page. Complete consistency in this respect has not been possible owing to irregularity in the practice of some journals. In excuse for occasionally defective information, particularly in respect to newspapers and ephemeral or inaccessible periodicals, the compiler pleads the practical exigencies of time.

J. Z.

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[*Comment*—December 28, p. 10 (Letter from B. K. Sandwell.).]

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[*Comment*—March 15, p. 17 (Letter from Struthers Burt).]

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[*Comment*—March 8, p. 16 (Letters from C. A. Hawthorne and Stephen Avery).]

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[*Comment*—May 10, p. 12 (Letter from Mary Austin).]

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[*Comment*—May 17, p. 14 (Letter from "Paul Bunyan").]

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[*Comment*—July 5, p. 10 (Letter from Francis Hackett).]

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[*Comment*—September 6, p. 8 (Letter from Rev. J. M. Rudy).]

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[*Comment*—April 25, p. 23 (Letter from R. P. Harriss).]

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